University of Alberta

Narrative Strategies in Wordsworth's The Excursion

by

Karen Mary Manarin

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the embedded narratives in William Wordsworth's The Excursion in terms of reception and in terms of narrative. My project is to examine the competing discourses within the various manuscript and published versions of The Excursion by focusing on the embedded narratives and the disjunctions that surround them. I argue that, although Wordsworth attempts to deflect criticism of The Excursion through specific narrative strategies, The Excursion has disappointed many of its readers, in part because Wordsworth challenges his readers' expectations with the embedded narratives of The Excursion. I suggest that Wordsworth attempts to educate his readers' affective response to narrative with these embedded narratives.

The introduction describes my methodology and theoretical approach. I use both reception theory and narrative theory in my discussion of Wordsworth as a narrative poet in a social context. The first chapter situates The Excursion in the context of critical expectations and reactions. The second chapter explores narrative strategies of isolation and defamiliarization in the tale of Margaret in Book I. The third chapter examines

strategies of iteration and exemplification by focusing on the tale of the Wanderer as an exemplary biography. The fourth chapter looks at the effects of repetition in the Solitary's tale and The Excursion in terms of revolution and affective response. The fifth chapter argues that the Churchyard tales can be read as a cumulative series subject to pressures of homogenization. The sixth chapter argues that the Churchyard tales serve as a kind of affective shorthand based upon lessons about response and narrative already learned. The seventh chapter examines several tales where the response modelled is clearly inadequate. I suggest Wordsworth is trying to promote an alternative strategy of reading. The conclusion argues for the usefulness of reading The Excursion in our context as late twentieth century readers of Romantic poetry.

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My supervisory committee has supported me throughout this project, generously offering their time and advice at various stages. I would especially like to thank my supervisor David Miall for his encouragement.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: 1

"One picture from the living":

The Excursion and the Matron

Chapter One: 30

"clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings":

Expectations and The Excursion

Chapter Two: 68

"forgotten in the quiet grave":

Isolation and Margaret

Chapter Three: 106

"like a Being made of many Beings":

Exemplification and the Wanderer

Chapter Four: 143

"reconverted to the world":

Repetition and the Solitary

Chapter Five: 183

"Epitomise the life":

Multiplication in the Churchyard Books

Chapter Six: 214

"from theme to theme the Historian passed":

Association in the Churchyard Books

Chapter Seven: 250

Life "fashioned like an ill-constructed tale":

Expectations and The Excursion

Conclusion: 287

"A cabinet stored with gems and pictures":

The Excursion and its Embedded Narratives

Works Cited: 298

Introduction:

"One picture from the living":

The Excursion and the Matron

Roughly midway through William Wordsworth's The Excursion, the character known only as the Wanderer exclaims:

> "'O happy! yielding to the law
> Of these privations, richer in the main!--
> While thankless thousands are oppresst and clogged
> By ease and leisure; by the very wealth
> And pride of opportunity made poor;
> While tens of thousands falter in their path,
> And sink, through utter want of cheering light;
> For you the hours of labour do not flag;
> For you each evening hath its shining star,
> And every sabbath-day its golden sun.'" (5.828-37)

With these lines, the Wanderer reports his own reaction to a woman's tale of her life, a life marked by isolation and hardship. These lines are also a good example of why The

Excursion is so unpopular today. Jerome McGann, for instance, claims that Romantic poems present themselves as "innocent of moral or doctrinal commitments" (66); The Excursion, by contrast, has been criticized for being far too fond of its moral and doctrinal commitments.[1] The Wanderer's apparently easy dismissal of hardship, the acceptance of inequality, and the moralizing substitution of spiritual rewards for material needs seem designed to support a conservative status quo in post-revolutionary England. The lines become even more problematic in the context of the tale told to the Wanderer. The Matron, never named, is the "shining star" whose lantern guides her husband home over treacherous mountain paths. It is an "'anxious duty'" (5.762), interrupted by the Wanderer who frightens her by appearing out of the darkness. The husband's face is the "golden sun" mentioned by the Wanderer, since during the winter months, the only time the Matron sees her husband by daylight is "'when the sabbath brings its kind release'" (5.806), release from unrelenting labour. The woman's life is marked by isolation; not only does her husband work in a "'far-distant'" quarry (5.714), their cottage is "'Cut off'" (5.677) from the rest of the community and they have no children. The woman names as "friends" her wheel, fire, clock, birds, and dog (5.812-18). She cites her thoughts as her support but wishes they were more religious (5.824-26).[2] The details of her experience undermine the uplifting truth that the Wanderer seeks to impart, his sense that, despite their poverty, the couple is fortunate because of their faith and their union. As William Galperin notes, however, the economic realities of their lives "suggests that theirs is more a separation than a union" ("Imperfect" 204). Still, the Matron and her husband appear to rely upon each other, and while the Matron, at least, does not seem content, they survive. This survival begs to be valued in a way that is not acknowledged by the Wanderer's happy conclusion (5.828-29). The attention paid during the narrative to the daily struggles and doubts of the Matron troubles this conclusion, a pattern recurring throughout The Excursion.

The Wanderer's description of his encounter is actually the second attempt in The Excursion at verbalizing the experience of this couple in an elevated framework. The character known as the Pastor is the first to draw attention to their lonely existence as "'One picture from the living'" (5.669) before he describes the dead in "'Authentic epitaphs'" (5.651). This couple is carefully isolated in geographical and economic terms from the living community before being singled out for heavenly blessings. The Pastor claims that the "'best gift of heaven hath fallen on them; / Abundant recompense for every want'" (5.720-21) and then urges all to copy their example. The Pastor tries to argue that their lives can affect others through the tale despite their lack of human contact. He characterizes them as being able to hear in "'their noiseless dwelling place'" (5.723) "'The voice of wisdom whispering scripture texts'" (5.724). But the tale thus given, celebrating their isolation, lacks the specific detail that Wordsworth believed necessary for affective change on the part of not only the characters within the poem, but also any presumably pious reader.

After all, in the exchange leading to the Pastor's tale of the Matron, the Wanderer proclaims "'We see, then, as we feel'" (5.558) and goes on to suggest that

"Moral truth

> Is no mechanic structure, built by rule;
> And which, once built, retains a stedfast shape
> And undisturbed proportions; but a thing
> Subject, you deem, to vital accidents." (5.562-566)

It is the vital accidents, the specificity of experience and perspective, that leads to revelation of moral truth and the possibility of affective change through the tales in _The Excursion_. Susan Edwards Meisenhelder in _Wordsworth's Informed Reader: Structures of Experience in His Poetry_ suggests that the Wanderer deliberately adds details from the Matron's experience in his supplement to the Pastor's tale in order to trigger emotions (225-226).[3] But neither version can accommodate the Matron's experience, as constructed through the details of the tale, within the larger framework of moral generalization. Her experience articulated in part through her own words, however mediated, reveals a strong and tenacious woman. Her ability to endure appears to derive less from a belief in revealed religion than in her ability to adapt to circumstances. As William Galperin notes of both the Wanderer's and the Pastor's versions of this woman's life, "the real problem and the basis of the entire dispute is individuation, and what is more, individuation which threatens (as the Matron herself implies) to erode the very beliefs on which their views are founded" ("Imperfect" 204). That she continues to try to have faith even as she is aware of her doubts gives her character more depth than the Wanderer and the Pastor are prepared to acknowledge. Their tales elicit a response from the Solitary, but the response is inappropriate. The Solitary describes the Matron as an "'untutored bird'" (5.840) who does not "'contend for virtue's prize'" (5.856), contradicting the Pastor's and the Wanderer's assumption that she has triumphed over circumstances through virtue. The Solitary rejects the uplifting view of hardship suggested by the narrators of the Matron's tale because it is not supported by the experience of the Pensioner (first told in Book II).

Like the Solitary, I too have difficulties with this tale and the morals drawn from it. The Matron's tale contains many of the issues I examine in this dissertation. I explore the patterns of isolation, evident in the treatment of this and so many other embedded narratives, not only on a thematic but on a formal level as well, by examining the disjunctions surrounding specific narratives and the techniques of isolation within those narratives. I examine the roles of iteration and repetition and the related struggle between individual and type, issues evident in the versions of this woman's life. I also look at the place of biography in this supposedly philosophic poem.[4] I address the tension between fatalism and ambition alluded to by the Solitary in his discussion of the Matron and the Scottish peasant but apparent in many other episodes as well. Finally, I expose a hierarchy of tales within The Excursion based on both the subjects and narrators of the tales. In this instance, the Wanderer's version is given priority over the Pastor's, not just by a standard of specificity or positioning, but in length and response allowed. The Solitary's response, however, with its substitution of another tale, albeit short, for the Matron's undermines the Wanderer's authority by effectively changing the subject. I attempt to identify which subject positions and narrative techniques appear more attractive to

Wordsworth and the first reviewers of The Excursion and speculate on the reasons for these preferences.

I examine these issues by paying attention to the disjunctions in rhetoric and the narrative strategies within and surrounding the various manuscript and published versions of the embedded narratives. I look at Wordsworth's revisions, not so that I can reconstruct the earliest recoverable version of the text, but so that I can examine how The Excursion and the narratives it contains evolved as The Recluse project changed. I have chosen the 1849-50 version of the text as my base text for both practical and idealistic reasons.[5] It is still the most accessible version of The Excursion as it is available in Ernest de Selincourt's five volume Poetical Works of William Wordsworth; it also has line numbers, not available in the first edition of 1814 (reissued in facsimile in Jonathan Wordsworth's Woodstock series). A somewhat more idealistic reason for using the later text is that I want to respect Wordsworth's intentions in regard to this poem, even as I attempt to expose the effects and challenge the implications of these intentions.

I would first like to describe my methodology. I attempt to treat Wordsworth as a narrative poet in a social context. Specifically I am interested in embedded narratives of The Excursion and their reception. Thus, I have found it necessary to pay attention to both formal and social elements, despite a critical tradition that often divides issues of form from those of content as in the debate between the Russian Formalist and the Marxist schools.[6] I will argue, however, that formal and social approaches are not necessarily incompatible, as is evident from the work of a number of theorists including Jan Mukařovský, Hans Robert Jauss, and Michael J. Toolan. But before I trace this argument, and before I explain how these theoretical approaches inform my work, I need to define some terms.

The first term, and perhaps one of the most vexing, is form. The word is difficult not only because of its complicated history, as described by Raymond Williams (137-38), but also because of its association with the Russian Formalist school and the slogans and debates surrounding this movement. Victor Erlich argues that Viktor Šklovskij himself used the term "form" in an inconsistent manner:

> The Russian Formalist leader seemed to fluctuate between two differing interpretations of the term: he could not quite make up his mind as to whether he meant by 'form' a quality inherent in an esthetic whole or an esthetic whole endowed with a certain quality. (187)

Jan Mukařovský in an essay on Šklovskij's Theory of Prose argues that Šklovskij's "conception of 'form' deals with the entire scope of the literary work" (137) and that Šklovskij took "a first step toward the evolutionary overcoming of the contradiction between 'form' and 'content' conceptions of art" (138). While I certainly do not want to reinforce a strict division of form from content in The Excursion, I hesitate to classify everything under its rubric. I use the term "form" to indicate narrative patterns and strategies. I do not, however, believe that form is innocent of content. In The Excursion, Wordsworth is using different forms, trying to create a new form. This formal experimentation has implications for what he was able to achieve in The

Excursion. I believe that Wordsworth was targeting specific audiences by the forms he chose in The Excursion and that he was trying to expand his potential readership through The Excursion.

And these claims bring me to my second and third definitions, that of "social" and that of "class." In his exploration of the word "socialist," Raymond Williams notes that social can be

> understood in two ways, which have had profound effects on the use of the term by radically different political tendencies. Social in sense (i) was the merely descriptive term of society in its now predominant sense of the system of common life; a social reformer wished to reform this system. Social in sense (ii) was an emphatic and distinguishing term, explicitly contrasted with individual and especially individualist theories of society. (286)

While there can be, as Williams notes, considerable overlap between these two meanings, I am primarily interested in the first as I would like to emphasize relations between the poem's formal elements and its reception. This reception is, I will argue, influenced by considerations of class, where class indicates both an economic category and a rank.[7]

By examining formal elements in terms of reception, I am combining two approaches that some consider antithetical. Yet many critics have found a combination of formal and social approaches useful. The Russian Formalists inspired the Prague Linguistic Circle, where Jan Mukařovský argued for a structuralism which "does not limit literary history only to an analysis of 'form,' nor does it clash at all with sociological studies of literature" ("On Šklovskij's" 141). Mukařovský insists that

> The formalism of the Russian School of aesthetic and literary theory was correct in maintaining that all elements of a work are, without distinction, components of form. It must be added that all components are equally the bearers of meaning and extra-aesthetic values, and thus components of content. (Aesthetic 88-89)

Mukařovský's combination of formal and social concerns influenced a wide range of theorists, including reception theorist Hans Robert Jauss.

Jauss praises Mukařovský and the Prague structuralists as "Furthest from the dogma of the irreconcilability of structural and historical analysis" ("History of Art" 72). And, as Paul de Man notes,

> Structural aesthetics as practiced by the Prague circle are . . . far from being a threat to Jauss. His historical concepts seem to dovetail perfectly with their linguistic terminology. This theoretical alliance achieves a genuine synthesis between hermeneutics and poetics. (xviii)

Jauss describes his own project as an "attempt to bridge the gap between literature and history, between historical and aesthetic approaches" ("Literary History" 18). He seeks to do so by paying attention not only to the "producing subject" but also to "the consuming subject," through "the interaction of author and public" ("Literary History" 15). Robert C. Holub argues that "Jauss's attempt to overcome the

Marxist-Formalist dichotomy involves viewing literature from the perspective of the reader or consumer" (57).

I, too, will try to pay attention to the readers of The Excursion, for Wordsworth shaped The Excursion for a particular audience, and was himself shaped by The Excursion.[8] Jauss' concern with readers' expectations and with the concept of a literary series are also important for my work, as is his insistence on the social function of literature. This concern with discourse in a social context is shared by many theoretical approaches,[9] including critical linguistics. Michael J. Toolan, for example, argues that

> systematic analytical attention to the logic and dynamics of language behaviour--an attention that lays stress on coherence, empirical testability, and descriptive and explanatory insight--can and should shed light on any sub-domain or mode of language behaviour. (xiii)

Connections between linguistics and narrative theory have a long history. Many of the Russian Formalists had linguistic backgrounds, and many of their concerns remained tied to linguistics (Erlich 63-64). But Šklovskij moved beyond linguistics with his exploration of defamiliarization, and Formalism developed a theory of prose that includes such narratological concerns as the difference between fable (fabula) and plot (sjužet), the purpose of repeated episodes, and the effects of juxtaposition (Erlich 176-78; 240-44). Each of these concepts will reappear in the chapters that follow. Narrative theory thus offers me a vocabulary for describing the different versions of the narratives within The Excursion as well as a way of examining the effects of frequency and proximity.

I also refer to the work of Alexander Zholkovsky, a theorist influenced by the Russian Formalists. I find Alexander Zholkovsky's work useful, in part because he uses both poetry and prose in his analysis of expressiveness.[10] Yuri Shcheglov and Zholkovsky offer a systematic poetics of expressiveness, which proceeds from "the assumption that a literary text is an expressive embodiment . . . of a nonexpressive theme . . . which is defined as the invariant of all the text's components (parts, levels, images, etc.)" (1). Expressiveness, Shcheglov and Zholkovsky suggest, is achieved through a series of expressive devices, "elementary operations in terms of which the correspondences between θs [themes] and Ts [texts] are formulated" (28). The list of expressive devices includes concretization, repetition, preparation, division, augmentation, variation, contrast, combination, sudden turn, and reduction (29, 61), each with its own abbreviation. The Matron's tale as presented could be described by these devices: concretization of experience, repetition of tales, preparation by the Wanderer's commentary on perspective and moral truth, and so on. I am less interested, however, in identifying expressive devices in The Excursion than in some of the implications this theory of poetic expressiveness can have for a text many readers have criticized as being inexpressive.

Despite certain misgivings about the scientific claims of this poetics of expressiveness,[11] I nevertheless believe that Shcheglov's and Zholkovsky's work is useful for my examination of embedded narratives in The Excursion. Their basic assumption that the nonexpressive theme can be separated from the text in which it is translated through expressive devices offers a way of thinking about embedded narratives, like the one described earlier, where the stated theme does not appear to be effectively embodied in the text. If the theme of the Matron's tale is equivalent to the moral lessons drawn by the Pastor and the Wanderer, the expressive devices are ineffective; if the theme is something more, then the morals become expressive devices themselves, and the text can be read in a different way. By paying attention to the activity of expressive devices, particularly concretization, repetition, and preparation, I will examine how specific effects are attempted and whether they are achieved in The Excursion.

Of course, by trying to examine attempts and achievements, I have strayed into the area of intention. And while I do not believe it is possible to read The Excursion now as it was read in the early nineteenth century, I believe it is possible to discuss elements of Wordsworth's intentions for the poem. I believe that Wordsworth was both catering to and attempting to create a public sphere for educational and ethical purposes in the embedded narratives of The Excursion. I am using Jürgen

Habermas' definition of the public sphere as described in The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society because of its links to education and a reading public, although some have criticized this description as ahistorical and idealized.[12] Habermas suggests that the notion of a public sphere arose in the eighteenth century in response to the pressures of a developing market economy. Education and property ownership were the criteria for admission to this public sphere, which depended on the myth of universal access. The public sphere was inclusive in principle, however exclusive it might be in practice, because the issues discussed needed to be general in significance and accessibility (37). Habermas suggests that the criteria of education and property ensured that the public sphere was made up of the eighteenth century reading public (85). I suggest that Wordsworth is writing The Excursion for this reading public, even as he tries to expand this public with the speeches and subject positions presented in The Excursion. Kenneth Johnston argues that the embedded narratives in The Excursion demonstrate both the "decentralization of imagination from its traditional location in privileged classes in capital cities" and the "displacement from the mind of the poet who proposes such decentralization as his mode of triumph over established imaginations" (286). I will argue that Wordsworth attempts to decentralize subjectivity from its traditional location in privileged classes, so that characters like the Matron are allowed to articulate the details of their own experience, even as Wordsworth struggles to homogenize experience and force the embedded narratives into a pattern of exemplification supported by the tradition of the philosophical dialogue.

I begin by placing The Excursion and my project in context. The first chapter situates The Excursion in terms of critical expectations and reactions. I examine Romantic reactions to The Excursion in terms of apparent expectations of what a philosophical dialogue, rustic verse narratives, or The Recluse should be in post-revolutionary England. I then review some of the critical opinions about The Excursion, paying particular attention to the ways in which the embedded narratives have been treated over the years. I focus on the reception of Wordsworth as a narrative poet and on particular approaches that inform my work before turning to the embedded narratives themselves. These later chapters may focus on particular tales but are organized around the issues already raised in this introduction and range over the whole of The Excursion.

The second chapter takes up the issues of isolation and defamiliarization. Though isolation is a pattern repeated thematically and formally throughout The Excursion, I focus on the tale of Margaret in Book I because of the critical tradition surrounding "The Ruined Cottage" and the editorial fashion for the earliest recoverable version of a text. My discussion does not end with Book I, however, as I explore how the tale of Margaret is wrenched out of isolation in the context of The Excursion only to reinforce patterns of isolation through attention to the narrative frame.

The third chapter explores the strategy of exemplification in The Excursion by focusing on the tale of the Wanderer in terms of exemplary biography, a genre popular among the targeted market for The Excursion. I consider the social implications of having a pedlar as a major character in a serious poem, a character held up, by the Poet at least, as a model for readers. I examine the tale's use of iteration, arguing that specificity is reduced so that idealization and thus identification might be possible. I further argue that this tension between specificity and idealization is evident throughout _The Excursion_.

In the fourth chapter, I continue to explore the effects of frequency as I turn from issues of iteration to those of repetition with the Solitary's tale. I argue that repetition troubles the high moral ground of iteration as indeterminacy sneaks in with the Solitary's tale told and retold. I look at the various published and manuscript versions of the tale, along with other works that Wordsworth composed near the same time including passages from _The Prelude_ and poems on the death of his children. I also examine repetitions within the tale in terms of revolutions and repetitions on the larger scale of _The Excursion_ in terms of rejuvenation.

The fifth chapter looks at the tales of the Churchyard books, and earlier tales in retrospect, as a series which relies upon strategies of substitution and supplementation. I argue that the tales are in fact cumulative, but also that through this strategy of "rhetorical multiplication" (Johnston 220), they are also subject to a necessary division to a common denominator. The very abundance of exempla about members of different social classes and sensibilities as told by various narrators serves to limit their specificity and to impose a deterministic framework upon their subjects.

The sixth chapter argues, however, that the Churchyard tales are meant to serve as a sort of emotional shorthand based upon lessons about response already learned. I examine the tales in terms of associationist psychology and epitaphic convention. I suggest that as readers we are supposed to link the various tales through response articulated in commonplaces, though whether the response modelled by the characters within the poem is adequate remains questionable.

The seventh, and final, chapter examines several tales, including those of the Proud Woman and of Oswald, where the response modelled is clearly inadequate. I examine these tales in terms of literary and aesthetic expectations that are deliberately violated in The Excursion. I examine the appeal of certain subject positions, particularly that of the abandoned woman. I suggest that the amount of space and time allowed to these subject positions creates a hierarchy of tales within The Excursion that is reinforced by the strategies used in the tales. I then turn to the conclusions of the tales themselves, conclusions which frustrate expectations by appearing arbitrary or descending into bathos. I argue that Wordsworth is trying to promote an alternate strategy of reading.

My conclusion surveys some common ways of reading The Excursion by examining nineteenth century editions of the poem which alternately focus on piety and romance, but which pay little attention to the ill-constructed nature of experience. I conclude with the argument that by focusing on the Wordsworth of the egotistical sublime, we have neglected a possible resource for our own age's interrogation of subject positions that do not fit the Romantic ideal. The Excursion offers a model, by no means perfect, of competing voices, competing discourses. As the sometimes reluctant heirs of Romanticism, we can no longer afford to ignore this model or the issues that it raises.

Notes

1. Edward Bostetter suggests that "It is hard for [modern readers] not to suffer a sense of shock as they read its pious platitudes and realize that the poem was originally intended to embody and develop the fresh perceptions of the opening books of the _Prelude_" (433).

2. Before the 1845 edition of _The Excursion_, the Matron ends with the sentiment that her thoughts are her support. The addition of an explicitly Christian context will be discussed in Chapter Five.

3. Meisenhelder, however, believes that in his response to the Matron's tale (5.828-37), the Wanderer "leads his audience toward moral truth by transforming the images on which his narrative is built, the path and the light, into metaphors suggesting the difficult path of life and spiritual light in darkness" (226). I agree that the Wanderer is trying to transform the woman's tale into moral truth, but disagree as to his success.

4. The Matron, after all, is identified as Betty Yewdale in the Fenwick note to *The Excursion*, where Wordsworth describes visiting the Yewdales for tea on fine summer afternoons, hardly what one might expect from the descriptions of the Matron's life in Book V.

5. When another version is used, I will cite the version and either the line number or the page number.

6. For one account of this conflict, see Victor Erlich's *Russian Formalism: History, Doctrine*.

7. Raymond Williams identifies the basic range of meaning for "class" as the following:

> (i) *group* (objective); social or economic category, at varying levels.
>
> (ii) *rank*; relative social position; by birth or mobility
>
> (iii) *formation*; perceived economic relationship; social, political and cultural organization. (69)

8. As Mukařovský notes, "Not only does the poet's life influence his work, but his work also influences his life. The very success or failure of a work can change the course of a poet's life (and thereby his future creation)" ("The Poet" 144). I examine Wordsworth's expectations for The Excursion in Chapter One.

9. Although I am interested in discourse in a social context, my work is not genealogical in a Foucauldian sense, where genealogy is "situated within the articulation of the body and history (Foucault 148). Lee Quinby describes genealogy as putting "on display the making of moral or ethical values, revealing how certain values have been promoted by denying their manufacture, proclaiming them to be according to God and nature" (53). But Foucault is not the only theorist to be interested in discourse in context or to suggest that "context establishes regularities or prescribed ways of speaking that allow or disallow statements" (Quinby xv).

10. I use aspects of narrative theory in my examination of the embedded narratives of The Excursion because narrative theory offers a vocabulary about structure; however, I share Clare Regan Kinney's unease that narrative theory does not usually interrogate "the poetic narrative on its own terms" but instead uses "a critical vocabulary evolved for the description and analysis of prose fictions" (4). Mieke Bal, for example, makes a clear distinction between narrative and poetic characteristics (9), thus essentially marginalizing poetic narratives. I use Bal's work in Chapters Three and Four, however, because her distinction between layers of narrative and her analysis of frequency offer ways to describe different versions of the same narrative episode. I believe that narrative is a way of structuring experience, and thus, narrative theory can be applied to many different types of narrative, including poetic ones, though additional elements may need to be considered with poetry, or with prose, painting, or film.

11. The incessant, and somewhat distracting, use of abbreviations in the work of Shcheglov and Zholkovsky is symptomatic of their desire for scientific rigour and validity. Shcheglov and Zholkovsky are trying to develop a metalanguage that is "unambiguous (i.e. understood in the same way by all specialists), explicit and formally strict" (19). While I understand the usefulness of a metalanguage in analyzing and comparing various texts, I worry about the assumptions underlying the concept of an unambiguous language. I doubt that even a scientific or mathematical formula is understood in the same way by all specialists, if only because each specialist will associate different formulae with the first.

12. See, for example, the essays collected in Habermas and the Public Sphere, edited by Craig Calhoun.

Chapter 1:

"clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings": Expectations and The Excursion

Keats thought it was one of three things to rejoice at in the age, Shelley wrote "Alastor" in reaction to it, Byron called it a "drowsy frowzy poem" (3.847), and Francis Jeffrey of The Edinburgh Review began his famous review with the words "This will never do." The subject of such divergent reactions is, of course, William Wordsworth's long poem The Excursion. One reason for such divergent reactions is the juxtaposition of different types of discourse within The Excursion. The Excursion presents a philosophical dialogue within a narrative frame and uses specific narratives of rustic life to illustrate the philosophy; however, the discourse validated by this tradition of the philosophical dialogue is not reconciled with the tales intended to support it. My project is to examine the competing discourses within the various manuscript and published versions of The Excursion by focusing on these embedded tales and the rhetorical disjunctions that surround them. I believe that, in these tales about members of different social classes and sensibilities as told by various narrators, Wordsworth attempts to expand his repertoire of subjectivities by providing space for subject positions that do not fit the ideal articulated in The Prelude.

In this chapter I will examine the reception of The Excursion in terms of expectations. That its readers have had expectations is unavoidable. As Hans Robert Jauss notes,

> A literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. ("Literary" 23)

Jauss argues for the existence of an

> objectifiable system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance, from a pre-understanding of the genre,

> from the form and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetic and practical language. ("Literary" 22)

Jauss refers to this system of expectations as a "horizon of expectations" which can be modified as other texts are encountered ("Literary" 23). Robert C. Holub, however, argues that Jauss does not clearly define what he means by horizon (59) and suggests that

> The problem . . . is not so much with the procedure that Jauss proposes, which is more or less what many literary scholars do when they relate a work to the literary tradition and the social structure, but rather the notion of objectification itself. (60)

Jauss also takes for granted the difference between poetic and practical language, perhaps because of what Holub has called "the almost exclusive reliance on the Formalists' theory of perception through defamiliarization (_ostranenie_) to establish value" (63).[1] Yet despite this bias for novelty, Jauss' emphasis on expectations can be useful for a work like _The Excursion_ which disappointed, and continues to disappoint, the expectations of a number of its readers. In this chapter I will examine some early reactions to The Excursion in terms of expectations before turning to twentieth century critical expectations.

Francis Jeffrey's review probably has the most famous opening line of any review written in the Romantic period and, if subsequent critical attention is any indication, is also one of the most influential. With that first line, Jeffrey began a tradition in criticism of The Excursion that continues in some circles to this day--witty but premature dismissal. Jeffrey's review, however, is instructive precisely because it focuses on the rhetoric of The Excursion. Besides branding Wordsworth as a "Laker," with the radical politics that implies, Jeffrey attacks The Excursion on two major and potentially contradictory fronts: he criticizes The Excursion for its "mystical verbiage" (459), and for its prosaic detail. Characterizing the work as a "tissue of moral and devotional ravings, in which innumerable changes are rung upon a few very simple and familiar ideas" (459), Jeffrey goes on to mock the "details of preposterous minuteness" (460) in its tales and the "vulgarity" (459) of its characters. What appears to have troubled Jeffrey, in addition to his own need to denigrate the Lake poets, is the disjunction between philosophical sentiments and detailed tales of low characters. He acknowledges that the low subject matter is nothing new for Wordsworth; indeed, he even gives up trying to reform Wordsworth, noting that

> A man who has been for twenty years at work on such matter as is now before us, and who comes complacently forward with a whole quarto of it, after all the admonitions he has received, cannot reasonably be expected to "change his hand, or check his pride." (458)

Wordsworth, as Jeffrey notes, has too much "capital already sunk in the concern" (458) to change his subject matter now, but I will suggest that Wordsworth did risk capital, both economic and cultural, with The Excursion. Even Jeffrey recognizes that The Excursion is a departure in some way, a "singular performance" (460), for Wordsworth, and it is a performance that has for the most part disappointed the expectations of its readers and its author.

Jeffrey's review reflects certain tendencies of Romantic responses to The Excursion, though few reviewers reacted with the same vigour or rhetorical flourish. Other reviews repeat Jeffrey's concerns about The Excursion's doctrine, detail, and low characters, especially but not limited to the Wanderer's identity as a pedlar. Not all reviews were negative. William Hazlitt admired the philosophy though he too was critical of Wordsworth's choice of low characters, even making the startling claim that all country people hate each other (637). Charles Lamb praised doctrine and tales, but felt the need to suggest that readers might "substitute silently the word Palmer, or Pilgrim, or any less offensive designation" (111) for the offending word pedlar. Even reviewers who, like the one for The British Critic, praised The Excursion as "strong in encouragement of real, industrious, social virtue" (466), complained that Wordsworth showed "too much refinement in the application of spiritual associations to natural objects" (465), that the examples chosen did not complement the philosophy.

Perhaps this feeling that there is something odd about the relationship between doctrine and exempla comes from the competing traditions upon which The Excursion draws. Judson Stanley Lyon identifies four streams of eighteenth-century literature as influential in The Excursion: long blank verse didactic poems, funeral elegies, philosophical dialogues, and short verse narratives of rustic life (31). While all of these models shaped the form and content of The Excursion, along with the Graveyard School of the eighteenth century and menippean satire, the relationship between philosophical dialogue and short rustic narrative is particularly relevant to my examination of the embedded narratives.

George Myerson in The Argumentative Imagination: Wordsworth, Dryden, Religious Dialogues carefully places The Excursion within the tradition of the philosophical dialogue. He argues that, rather than reading The Excursion as a monologue according to Coleridge's famous suggestion that it "presents a species of ventriloquism, where two are represented as talking, while in truth one man speaks" (Biographia 397), we should reimagine "the whole dialogue as argumentative exchange, placing the more self-contained utterances in that context" (6). Myerson focuses on the exchanges between the Wanderer and the Solitary, suggesting that the Wanderer is "a figure who stands for good arguing" (25) because for him, "beliefs are subject to reversibility" (27). Yet the idiolects of the characters in this argument often fail to vary. In fact, some of the dialogue between the Wanderer and the Solitary was originally conceived as the thoughts of one speaker. In DC MS. 16 a passage entitled "Fragment" begins with the words "There is an active principle alive in all things" (49^v), a version of the opening line of Book IX in The Excursion. But what becomes a dialogue between the Wanderer and the Solitary in the published versions of the poem is here the musings of a single speaker. This speaker believes both that "Our active powers those powers themselves be=come / Subversive of our noxious qualities" (49^r) and that "With the least taint and injury to the air / The sick man breathes their human form divine / And their eternal soul may waste away" (50^v), sentiments attributed to the Wanderer (9.131-32) and the Solitary (9.150-52) respectively. I have other arguments with Myerson's dismissal of the embedded narratives (73), but Myerson does situate The Excursion in the tradition of the eighteenth century philosophical dialogue, a tradition where, as Myerson observes about an excerpt from Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, "human tensions creep in" (74).

Another literary influence on The Excursion could be James Thomson's phenomenally popular Seasons where tableaux of rustic life punctuate and add interest to a generalized catalogue of the changing seasons. A. D. Harvey in English Poetry in a Changing Society, 1780 to 1825 suggests that Thomson's figures were in fact influenced by extra-literary models, the genre figures used to set off the landscape in painting and the exempla from latin rhetoric (24-25). Harvey outlines a late eighteenth-century craze for converting Thomsonian-like episodes into brief narratives (96) but notes that the vogue for poetry about the rural poor was over by 1805 (85). He cites George Crabbe's "Parish Register" (1807) as the last descriptive poem about rural poverty to be a modest success (87). Judson Stanley Lyon has suggested that the Churchyard tales are Wordsworth's attempts to answer Jeffrey's earlier comparison of him with Crabbe (39), but even if Wordsworth did want to show that he could write brief verse narratives of rustic life better than Crabbe, he must have intended more for the tales of The Excursion. Why would he seek to emulate a fashion already fading by imitating a poet whose depictions of rural life lacked, in Wordsworth's own words, "a charitable, (and being so) philosophical and poetical construction" ("To Samuel Carter Hall" 348)? Wordsworth believed that with The Excursion and the rest of The Recluse he would be able "to construct a literary Work that might live" (Preface to Excursion vii). He wanted to create a work that could blend different literary models, different modes of discourse--argument, description, philosophy, poetry, in order to convey "clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings" (Preface to Excursion x) without formally articulating a moral or philosophical system. But, as Jan Mukařovský notes, "Although the poet's attitude toward the value of the work influences the artistic structure of creation, his intention need not be fulfilled by the actual fortunes of the completed work" ("Poet" 150). What Wordsworth achieved is certainly not what he, or Coleridge, expected.

As early as 1799 Coleridge was begging Wordsworth to work on his great philosophical poem, The Recluse. What exactly The Recluse was supposed to consist of is unclear, was unclear even to Wordsworth as he struggled to fulfil Coleridge's expectations. In a letter to Wordsworth dated 1799, Coleridge seems to distinguish between The Recluse and a second project,

> a poem, in blank verse, addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft titles of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*. (527)

He goes on to suggest that this poem might form a part of The Recluse (527), and indeed it sounds much like The Excursion. In 1804 he described The Recluse as "the first &

finest philosophical Poem, if only it be (as it undoubtedly will be) a Faithful Transcript of his [Wordsworth's] own most august & innocent Life, of his own habitual Feelings & Modes of seeing and hearing" ("To Richard Sharp" 1034), a description that suits The Prelude. Despite Wordsworth's entreaties, however, Coleridge offered no specific advice about how to write The Recluse beyond The Prelude except in hindsight as recriminations and complaints.[2]

Coleridge made his disappointment in The Excursion quite obvious, complaining to Lady Beaumont who promptly let Wordsworth know that Coleridge was displeased. Coleridge's remarks about The Excursion in The Biographia Literaria are somewhat coy about the intentions behind The Recluse, though he does identify The Excursion as The Recluse and not merely as part of the longer work (372). He attacks the matter-of-factness, the inconstancy of style, and the low characters of The Excursion. In particular, he complains that incongruity is often excited "by the sudden superiority of some other passage forming the context" (391); he could not reconcile the detailed narratives about low characters with the philosophical discourse in The Excursion. But what did

Coleridge expect from a man who already showed a predilection for sometimes puzzling pictures of rural life and the "real language of men" (Wordsworth "Preface to Lyrical 151)?

Apparently, Coleridge expected "Facts elevated into Theory--Theory into Laws--& Laws into living & intelligent Powers--true Idealism necessarily perfecting itself in Realism, & Realism refining itself into Idealism" ("To William Wordsworth" 22 May 1815 575). This somewhat unhelpful prescription for what was to be the greatest philosophical poem concludes Coleridge's belated explanation of what he wanted Wordsworth to accomplish with The Excursion and The Recluse. Coleridge expected "the Colors, Music, imaginative Life, and Passion of Poetry; but the matter and arrangement of Philosophy" (574); in short, he wanted Wordsworth to articulate systematically a moral and philosophical argument. Coleridge thought Wordsworth should have treated the faculties of man in the abstract and then individually, removed the "sandy Sophisms of Locke, and the Mechanic Dogmatists," and demonstrated that the senses are living growths of the mind and spirit (574). Then

Wordsworth was to have examined the human race, disproved evolutionism, affirmed a fall, and described men across history and cultures, before pointing out the scheme of redemption, its possible obstacles, the AntiChrist, and "the necessary identity of a true Philosophy with true Religion" (575).

The surprise is not that Wordsworth could not fulfil such a scheme, but that Coleridge thought that anyone could. In some ways, Coleridge's prescription sounds like an eighteenth-century moral treatise on the structure of the universe; it does not sound like a poem, at least not one that is likely to have any hold on our century. Thomas McFarland argues that Wordsworth could not possibly have fulfilled Coleridge's expectations because of the way the project was set up; when Wordsworth and Coleridge projected The Recluse as views "On Man, on Nature, and Human Life" (Preface to Excursion x), they neglected a third term, deity. I argue that Wordsworth could not have fulfilled Coleridge's expectations for a different reason: he did not believe in the efficacy of systems of moral philosophy.

In a fragment entitled "Essay on Morals" and probably composed in 1798 or 1799, Wordsworth attacks systems of moral philosophy as impotent to do good but not evil and, therefore, asserts that "publications in which we formally & systematically lay down rules for the actions of Men cannot be too long delayed" (103). He believes in the power of habitual action, outlining a position reminiscent of Edmund Burke, long before Wordsworth's supposed conversion to conservatism.[3] Wordsworth argues that he knows

> no book or system of moral philosophy written with sufficient power to melt into our affections [?s], to incorporate itself with the blood & vital juices of our minds, & thence to have any influence worth our notice in forming those habits of which I am speaking. (103)

Like the Wanderer who insists that "'Moral truth / Is no mechanic structure'" (5.562-563), Wordsworth in this fragment seems to insist on the importance of affect and habit over reason. Systems "contain no picture of human life; they describe nothing" (103). "The Essay on Morals" appears to offer sentiments which could have led Wordsworth to the dramatic form of The Excursion and the embedded tales, to the "'vital accidents'" (5.566) placed within a philosophical dialogue. It also contradicts Coleridge's belated plan for The Recluse. With The Fxcursion Wordsworth was not aiming for philosophical discourse with a narrative frame; he wanted to create pictures of life set to act upon the habits and feelings of his readers. After all, in the preface to the 1814 edition of The Excursion, he confidently stated that

> It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system: it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself. (x)

And yet, readers did, and continue to, have difficulty extracting the system for themselves. I believe that part of this difficulty lies in the relation between the images, feelings, and thoughts, the relation between the embedded narratives and philosophical frame.

Wordsworth's own hopes for the reception of The Excursion were dashed. The Excursion was first published as a quarto, in a run of 500 copies, with the ridiculous price of £2.2s.[4] The price appears at first glance to exclude any audience except the wealthy. Letters by both William and Dorothy Wordsworth indicate that they expected the edition to sell out so that a cheaper octavo edition could be put out to reach more people. By February of 1815, however, Dorothy Wordsworth reports that only 269 copies had been sold besides those ordered by Wordsworth, another 30 or so, and regrets the decision to publish in quarto ("To Sara Hutchinson" 202). Wordsworth in a letter to Thomas Poole acknowledges that "as it is in some places a little abstruse, and in all, serious, without any of the modern attractions of glittering style, or incident to provoke curiosity, it cannot be expected to make its way without difficulty" (211) and so asks Poole if he "can conscientiously recommend this expensive work to any of your wealthier friends" (210). The Wordsworths attempted to stimulate the sale of The Excursion by appealing to acquaintances for recommendations and entreating them not to lend the book to those who could afford to buy it. In a letter to Catherine Clarkson, Wordsworth targets a very specific audience, the readership of The Philanthropist "because it circulates a good deal among Quakers, who are wealthy and fond of instructive Books" (181).

The cheaper octavo edition was not published until 1820; when it appeared The Literary Gazette praised the cheaper edition for expanding The Excursion's potential readership. Indeed, The Literary Gazette claimed that, because of the expense, the poem had been as inaccessible "as if it had continued in manuscript" (837). Wordsworth sought to market The Excursion as a significant achievement at a significant price; he also sought to create the taste by which he was to be enjoyed, where "to create taste is to call forth and bestow power, of which knowledge is the effect" ("Essay, Supplementary" 82). Wordsworth marketed The Excursion to the reading public but also sought to expand this public through education.

The publication history of The Excursion can be read as reflecting this dual focus on the public sphere--the educated classes who could read The Excursion and those who could be educated to read it. The literary conventions used, the epic tone of the "Prospectus" for example, point to a polite readership. And yet, The Excursion includes numerous depictions of subjectivity of other classes, though of course structured by Wordsworth's middle class perspective. Indeed, Francis Jeffrey was quite annoyed that Wordsworth concentrated on other classes at the expense, or so he claims, of the reading public:

> if Mr. Wordsworth, instead of confining himself almost entirely to the society of the dalesmen and cottagers, and little children, who form the subjects of his book, had condescended to mingle a little more with the people that were to read and judge of it, we cannot help thinking that its texture might have been considerably improved. (459)

But Wordsworth certainly hoped that at least some members of the classes represented in The Excursion would be able to and would choose to read it. I believe that Wordsworth's desire to expand the potential audience is reflected in the careful delineation in economic and social terms of the tellers of tales: a retired pedlar, a recluse who had a wealthy wife, a pastor from an old, and monied, family, and a poet, the only character whose economic circumstances do not explain his leisure to tell tales precisely because his business is the telling of tales, including The Excursion. These characters have the leisure and the education to enjoy tales, especially instructive ones like The Excursion. Certainly, some characters within the embedded tales, the Matron and her husband for example, could not be imagined as readers of a quasi-philosophical poem, but they are given characteristics suggesting sensibility, a common humanity, and even individuality.

The tales prepare the way for the educational scheme put forth later in The Excursion. The Wanderer looks forward to the day that the state will realize its parental obligation to educate all children, or at least all male ones, regardless of class (9.293-305). Wordsworth looked forward to the day when the fickle Public described in the 1815 "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" would be transformed, educated, into the People of posterity who would value The Excursion. The state eventually did realize an obligation to educate its citizens and enacted a system of national education, but the readership Wordsworth hoped for, the public sphere he participated in creating, never materialized for The Excursion.

Don Bialostosky suggests that The Excursion has the dubious honour of being "the least read and least written about major poem by a major poet in English" (73-74). And certainly, the critical fortunes of The Excursion have not brightened from its initial mixed reviews. Russell Noyes (1973) even felt the need to present reasons why one should bother to read The Excursion to a conference of, and later a journal for, Wordsworthians. William Minto at the end of nineteenth century speaks for many twentieth century critics as well when he argues that Wordsworth's desire to write a philosophical poem was "a mistaken ambition" (445) and complains that the characters in The Excursion "have no distinct individual life, and take no hold on the memory" (448), thus effectively attacking both the doctrine and the tales of The Excursion. Yet The Excursion was influential in the nineteenth century. I began this chapter with the reactions of Keats, Shelley and Byron. Thomas Peacock alludes to The Excursion in Melincourt (1817). Felicia Hemans creates her version of the Wanderer in Modern Greece (1817). The Excursion inspired a significant number of people, as evidenced by the existence of works by minor figures, like The Wanderer's Legacy: A Collection of Poems on Various Subjects (1829) by Catharine Grace Godwin. The Excursion was Wordsworth's most substantial work available in his lifetime, and as such, it was part of what earned him the position of poet laureate. As William Galperin notes, The Excursion "went from a mistake immediately following its publication in 1814, to a masterpiece in the Victorian period" ("Anti-Romanticism" 364).

The twentieth century has not been quite so kind to The Excursion. Even with the burgeoning of studies of Romanticism in the 1960s, The Excursion has continued to suffer from a particular view of Wordsworth, a view Matthew Arnold did much to popularize with his "Preface to The Poems of Wordsworth" (1879). Arnold claimed that, at its best, Wordsworth's poetry has no style except for a profound sincereness and austere naturalness (309). The Excursion has far too much philosophy ever to be a "satisfactory work" (305) for Arnold and those critics who have followed his lead. Harold Bloom, who argues in The Visionary Company that Wordsworth offers a "naturalistic celebration of the possibilities inherent in our condition, here and now" (124), places The Excursion in a section called "The Frozen Spirit." Carl Woodring reads The Excursion as a "somewhat allegorical objectification of an interior struggle" (183). He also argues that The Excursion suffered from "the engraftment, during its slow growth, of tales and argumentative passages conceived independently" (182), a charge that also could be, but is not, laid against The Prelude. Indeed, twentieth century critics have fairly consistently privileged The Prelude and the Romantic ideals of originality, imagination, and individuality that it promotes over The Excursion.

Even as the New Historicists began questioning the assumptions of Romantic poetry and Romanticism,[5] Wordsworth and The Excursion continue to be judged by the same criteria, only now Wordsworth as the champion of the egotistical sublime is reviled instead of exalted. The

Excursion, not fitting preconceptions about Wordsworth's poetry, continues to be ignored. Marjorie Levinson claims that Wordsworth's poems evince "extreme disinterest" (5) in social and economic realities, a claim not convincing for The Excursion. She cursorily refers to The Excursion, however, to "prove" her contention that Wordsworth sought to "de- and re-'figure the real,' so that the narrator-poet may restore continuity to a socially and psychically fractured existence" (5). Levinson does not consider the possibility that in works like The Excursion Wordsworth could have sought to figure the real in a way that would allow the coexistence of competing social and discursive forces. Jerome McGann uses Wordsworth as the representative Romantic poet, claiming that "his works--like his position in the Romantic Movement--are normative and, in every sense, exemplary" (Romantic 82). Wordsworth becomes the straw man, bound to a set of pre-determined intentions, regardless of what the specific poems or publication history might suggest. When McGann claims that "one basic doctrine which Romantic poems continually present for reader consumption is that they are innocent of moral or doctrinal commitments"

(Romantic 66), he effectively excludes The Excursion from further consideration, although he does discuss "The Ruined Cottage" as an example of displacement (Romantic 82-85). In Chapter Two, I examine another displacement, that of The Excursion for "The Ruined Cottage," which was not published and therefore not exposed to public scrutiny or public opinion in Wordsworth's lifetime. Alan Liu commits a similar displacement in Wordsworth: A Sense of History when he mentions The Excursion but chooses to focus on "The Ruined Cottage." Attention to the historical specificity of experience has not included attention to the historical reception of Wordsworth, as an anxious author almost pricing himself out of the marketplace with a poem that flaunts its moral doctrines.

The Excursion, of course, does not fit McGann's definition of the typical Romantic poem in its combination of moral doctrine and narrative, in its rhetoric. The term rhetoric in Romanticism, however, inevitably carries connotations of the work of Paul de Man and his followers, the so-called Rhetorical School. As Don Bialostosky notes, Paul de Man's influence on studies of Wordsworth is out of proportion with the actual extent of his criticism on Wordsworth (153). De Man focuses on minute segments of text in order to describe figures of language, where "Figuration is the element in language that allows for the reiteration of meaning by substitution" ("Shelley" 114-15). De Man traces the substitutions, the transformations, displayed by the text in a way that troubles the boundary between figure and intention, rhetoric and psychology. He pays attention to gaps within the text that readers usually elide. His method of reading pays much needed attention to form as constitutive of content, but it can only address certain forms. In "Historicism, Deconstruction, and Wordsworth," Frances Ferguson suggests that De Man imagines form as enabling a movement in excess of experience (37); thus, De Man "makes the literary the arena of the nonhuman, in that literature only makes radically formal statements" (39). The strategies of Paul de Man are not very congenial to narratives of experience, to The Excursion in fact.

Tilottama Rajan suggests that Paul de Man's followers, the second generation of deconstructive critics like Cynthia Chase and Timothy Bahti, are "profoundly antinarrative"

("Erasure" 351). In fact, she sees post-structuralist readings of Wordsworth as part of a tradition, from New Critics to New Historicists, that erases Wordsworth as a narrative poet, "as a poet who places himself in a social text" ("Erasure" 366). Rajan argues that in "narrative considered as the process of telling, identity emerges through a series of diacritical relationships with others and with events that both place and displace the subject" ("Erasure" 353). Narrative, in this sense, represents the subject in the world, the author in a social text.[6]

In the chapters that follow, I argue for Wordsworth as a narrative poet who places himself in a social text with The Excursion without limiting this text to expressions of his own subjectivity. Wordsworth presents different subject positions within The Excursion, some more philosophically or psychologically convincing than others, but this exploration of different subject positions, different voices, is one reason why The Excursion is important. I believe that The Excursion attempts to expand its audience by expanding the range of subject positions with which the reader could identify. Whether or not readers were able to take advantage of this increased range of subject positions is, of course, another question. I treat Wordsworth as a narrative poet who, in _The Excursion_, creates tales told from different perspectives which may clash, creating other layers of narrative. _The Excursion_ also expands our definitions of Romanticism by foregrounding a desire for social relevance through narrative. If this desire is not examined on its own terms, Wordsworth's achievement as a narrative poet in _The Excursion_ will continue to be overshadowed by disappointed expectations for a philosophical poem.

Readings of _The Excursion_ can be loosely grouped into those by readers who approve of the embedded narratives and those by readers who do not. William Galperin has observed that without the last five books of _The Excursion_, which contain most of the embedded narratives, "it is doubtful that _The Excursion_ would have received either the approbation it garnered for nearly half of the nineteenth century or the critical opprobrium of the twentieth" (_Revision_ 50). In _Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit_

Frances Ferguson uses words like "ungainly" (238) to refer to the structure of "those notorious last five books" (241). Susan Wolfson in *The Questioning Presence: Wordsworth, Keats, and the Interrogative Mode in Romantic Poetry* argues that in the Churchyard books narrative collapses into "the rigid prescriptions of the exemplum" (125). Concerns that Wordsworth privileged these embedded narratives at the expense of philosophical debate are not new; after all, in the first substantial review of *The Excursion* Hazlitt wished that Wordsworth had given it "the form of a philosophical poem altogether" and complained that it was "encumber[ed]" by narrative (555), a sentiment with which these modern critics agree. Dorothy Wordsworth's response to this review was to claim popular opinion for the narratives: "Now that the narrative will be liked the best by most Readers we have no doubt; therefore we are always most glad to hear that the religious and philosophical parts are relished" ("To Catherine Clarkson" 160). As is obvious from this project, I like the narratives, but in that I am not alone.

Two modern critics who have examined the embedded narratives of *The Excursion* in a constructive fashion are

Kenneth Johnston and James Chandler. I will refer to their work in the following chapters as I examine specific issues, but here I would like to outline their treatment of the embedded narratives in general before indicating where I believe their work could be taken further. Kenneth Johnston's *Wordsworth and "The Recluse"* offers some very useful observations about Wordsworth's use of embedded narratives, not only in *The Excursion*, but in *The Recluse* project. He suggests that the stories in "Home at Grasmere" display "Wordsworth's characteristic trope of generalization in *The Recluse*: story-telling to achieve a sense of logical force by rhetorical multiplication" (220), and certainly the last five books of *The Excursion* display this dynamic, some would argue to excess. Even Johnston claims that everyone wishes the last five books were shorter (285). Johnston identifies a focus on the characters' mental efforts to meet circumstances in the stories (286), a focus which could be related to Richard Payne Knight's analysis of the sublime as "mental or personal energy exerted" (366) though Johnston does not cite him. Johnston also draws an interesting parallel between the spots of time in *The Prelude* and the tales of The Excursion, contrasting a moment expanded to affect lives with a life contracted to an epitaphic moment (297). But interesting as this formulation is, it does not address the multiple tellings of these lives or the contradictions between the tale and the moral gloss. Johnston does not account for the disjunctions within The Excursion nor for the unease these disjunctions create in the poem's characters and the poem's readers.

Part of the problem may be Johnston's need in this project to relate everything back to The Recluse, and therefore, to find neat organizational patterns in The Excursion. He claims that the sixteen tales which make up Books VI and VII are based on matching pairs, which make up four quartets, two in each book, divided in the middle by a digression on method (297), but this pattern only fits if you count the woodcutter episode in Book VII as both interlude and tale. Johnston's pattern also conflates two tales about widowers at the end of Book VI in the 1814 version. The tale of the second widower who remarries is excised after the 1820 edition. Johnston does note in passing that "an unbalancing third domestic tragedy was wisely cut after 1820" (305), but since Johnston examines The Recluse project primarily up to 1814, surely his organizational pattern should account for such unbalanced tales, especially as he claims that the second story of each pair "rounds out the exemplum of the first" (297). He does not address the possible implications of the cumulative nature of the Churchyard tales.

James Chandler also examines the embedded narratives of The Excursion in a useful and provocative way. He, too, connects The Prelude's spots of time with what he calls "their traditionary counterparts" in The Excursion (207). He notes that both are referred to as "passages of life" in each poem, that both are clustered in units throughout their respective poems, and that both "are represented as coming without calculation" (207). He argues that the

> spot narratives in both poems give us a present fact (the spot) in association with present feelings that are obscurely representative of some past fact--an experience of the joy of nature in the first case and of the worth of another person in the second. (210)

Chandler's comparison of the structure of the spots of time and the embedded narratives in terms of affect and time offers an important insight into how Wordsworth was trying to use these narratives; they are a "joint production of past fact and present feeling" (210). Chandler connects these endeavours with a Burkean traditionalism, but when he describes the narratives as embodying "the oral-traditional structure of time" (210), he does not address the disjunctions within the embedded narratives and their frame. He does not address inconsistency between versions or between tale and moral.

A third figure influential in my readings of the Excursion is William Galperin because he has defended the later Wordsworth against the myth of the Golden Decade. More specifically for my work, he has argued that The Excursion discredits The Prelude as personal epic by dismantling the authoritative function of the poet (Revision 32). Galperin suggests Wordsworth was the first to undertake revision of his authority, the authority he claimed with The Prelude, by challenging poetic authority with The Excursion (Revision 7). Galperin argues that

> No sooner is the character of the Poet introduced in The Excursion than he relinquishes his professional dispensation to the Wanderer--and after him, to the Solitary and the Pastor, who also represent authority. This succession of authority from the Poet to others proceeds less from Wordsworth's 'assurance' of 'his identity as a poet' (Rzepka 98-99), than from his sense that poetic identity is always a creation of the self in the image of something else. (Revision 8)

I do not feel that Galperin pays enough attention to Wordsworth's bid for poetic authority with the publication of The Excursion, but Galperin does allow Wordsworth some measure of irony, some measure of self, and poetic, awareness. He also draws attention to the dynamics of individuation at work in the embedded narratives, dynamics I will address in several chapters as they underlie many of my claims about The Excursion.

I believe that Wordsworth did answer Coleridge's request for a poem for post-revolutionary times, but we have yet to learn how to read it or how to appreciate it, though it can no longer be read as Wordsworth intended. We continue to have difficulty reconciling the clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings conveyed by The Excursion because we expect a different sort of poem, a different sort of poetic authority. What follows is an attempt to read the competing discourses, the competing subject positions, of The Excursion through its embedded narratives.

Notes

1. Jauss later qualifies his claims for novelty when he criticizes "those aesthetic theories for which all experience of art is to be measured by the categories of innovation: the excitement of a constantly renewed form" (Aesthetic 161).

2. After considerable pressure from the Wordsworths, Coleridge claimed that his notes for The Recluse were burned when the man to whom they were entrusted, Major Adye, died of the plague in 1805 ("To the Wordsworths" 1 May 1805). Coleridge mentions Major Adye's death in his notebooks (2397) but makes no mention there of papers having been burned.

3. James Chandler in Wordsworth's Second Nature:; A Study of the Poetry and Politics traces the relationship between Burke's and Wordsworth's thought, especially in the area of second nature or "habits generated by social circumstance" (72). Chandler argues, for example, that The Prelude is written from a Burkean perspective as Wordsworth denounces abstract theories and systems in favour of custom and domestic ties.

4. The price even sparked the author of a scathing article about literary profits, "The Spoils of Literature," to claim that "A shilling pamphlet would contain all the tolerable passages" (224) of The Excursion and to call Wordsworth a "poetical pick-pocket" (222).

5. Jerome McGann describes the ground thesis of The Romantic Ideology, and for much New Historicist work, when he proclaims that "the scholarship and criticism of Romanticism and its works are dominated by a Romantic Ideology, by an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations" (Romantic 1). Almost a decade later, he qualifies his position by acknowledging that The Romantic Ideology contains "a residual investment in a type of interpretive thought that [he] was explicitly trying to avoid" ("Rethinking" 740).

6. Hans Kellner in Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked observes that narrative is our dominant way of structuring experience:

> If narrative is the reflection *par excellence* of the Western mentality in its broadest sense, it is because of its perceived formal truthfulness, the implicit feeling that we experience the world in the same form as we report those experiences, as stories. (103)

Chapter 2:

"forgotten in the quiet grave":

Isolation and Margaret

Faced with a certain prejudice against peddling, the former occupation of the Wanderer, Charles Lamb suggested readers "substitute silently the word _Palmer_, or _Pilgrim_, or any less offensive designation" (111). Today, notions of what is offensive may have changed--certainly the Wanderer's pious generalizations about poverty now seem more startling than his occupation--but the strategy remains the same; many critics substitute _The Ruined Cottage_ for _The Excursion_. I suggest that the implications are much the same for both substitutions. In each case the readers' judgement of what is offensive leads to the distortion of authorial intention; in each case, uncomfortable details are elided in favour of considerations of literary and moral propriety. In this chapter, I will argue that isolating the tale of Margaret, an isolation encouraged by both thematic and formal markers in the text, limits Margaret's significance, limits, in fact, Wordsworth's achievement in creating a tale of an abandoned woman which cannot be easily assimilated into appeals to pathos or piety. I suggest that the tale of Margaret, like many other embedded narratives in The Excursion, fosters the effect of isolation only to violate this isolation as Wordsworth attempts to cross certain borders with this tale, borders marking the conventions of narrative. I examine the isolation of Margaret in terms of content and form. I use Alexander Zholkovsky's concept of code sphere concretization and argue that Wordsworth is using a strategy of defamiliarization in order to highlight the constructed nature of this embedded narrative.

Certainly, many critics have isolated the tale of Margaret by focusing on The Ruined Cottage rather than The Excursion, thereby avoiding an inconvenient social context. As William Galperin notes, "It is now a commonplace among Wordsworthians of every persuasion that The Ruined Cottage in any of its several unpublished versions (1797, 1798, 1799) is far superior in substance and in sensibility to book I of The Excursion" ("Then" 343). Even critics of the ideology of Romanticism like Jerome McGann tend to privilege

The Ruined Cottage over The Excursion. Having characterized Wordsworth's poetry as both normative and exemplary, McGann chooses The Ruined Cottage "partly because it is a great poem, and partly because its structural methods for dealing with substantive issues are so clear" (Romantic 82). McGann goes on to discuss the poem in terms of displacements and erasures,[1] but one displacement not considered is that of The Excursion by this manuscript version.

One factor in this displacement is a trend in critical editing towards selecting the earliest recoverable version of a text as the copy text. Although editors have traditionally attempted "to reconstruct texts as their authors have finally intended them" (Williams and Abbott 58), alternate practices may arise when, as in the case of Wordsworth, these final intentions are judged to be aesthetically inferior to earlier ones. Jonathan Wordsworth proclaims that "On the whole poets are known by the best versions of their works: Wordsworth is almost exclusively known by the worst" (Music xiii), a situation he set out to change with The Ruined Cottage. Stephen Parrish argues that Wordsworth's revisions "have obscured the original, often the best, versions of his work" (v). Stephen Gill claims that "Most readers, from his contemporaries onwards, have found the later poetry less compelling than the earlier" (v) and chooses The Ruined Cottage over Book I of The Excursion for the Oxford Authors edition of Wordsworth. The aesthetic judgment of these editors becomes the textual criterion of chronological priority, privileging earlier texts like The Ruined Cottage, even though, as Jack Stillinger notes, "It is doubtful . . . whether the poet himself considered any version complete before the printed text of 1814" (84). A poem Wordsworth considered to be part of his most ambitious project and worthy of being published as a substantial achievement is replaced by manuscript lines never published in his lifetime. Of course, part of the popularity of The Ruined Cottage comes from the fact that it is readily available. With The Music of Humanity in 1969, Jonathan Wordsworth effectively presented The Ruined Cottage as a coherent, and aesthetically pleasing, whole. The Cornell Wordsworth series also published The Ruined Cottage, offering reading texts of MSS. B and D, DC MSS. 17 and 16, as well as transcriptions and photographic facsimiles; the proposed Cornell Wordsworth edition of The Excursion has not yet appeared.

Many critics isolate the tale of Margaret, even when ostensibly discussing The Excursion. One strategy is to read the tale of Margaret as the key to The Excursion. Charlotte Beck argues that The Ruined Cottage "furnished a paradigm for The Excursion, the embryo whence it grew into an ungainly offspring" (99). She argues that The Ruined Cottage is "the microcosm of all that is to come in the slowly unfolding Excursion" (Beck 100). Beck does describe subsequent embedded narratives as "producing an interplay of perspectives" (99), but links everything back to The Ruined Cottage, claiming that all of the Pastor's stories

> have their counterparts in aspects of 'The Ruined Cottage': prodigals like Robert, some who do and some who do not return; wise and foolish parents, like Robert and Margaret, who experience the loss of children . . . and, of course, the forsaken women (105).

She does not acknowledge the difference between The Ruined Cottage and the tale of Margaret as presented in The Excursion as one among many tales.

I do not deny that the tale of Margaret contains many of the issues and strategies repeated later in The Excursion; indeed much of my argument depends upon this fact. But the tale of Margaret does not have the first or last word on these issues; after all, The Excursion offers the Wanderer's history as the first, and in many ways exemplary, embedded narrative, and it is possible to choose any of these embedded narratives as a way into The Excursion, as I have chosen the Matron's tale. Even as I draw attention to shared thematic and formal features between tales, I do not want to elide the specificity of these tales, precisely because I believe it is in this specificity that Wordsworth was attempting something remarkable, the representation of different subjectivities. These subjectivities are developed, and criticized, through the different narrative frames of The Excursion, as the process of building subject positions through narrative is exposed, as the conventions of narrative are exposed.

James Chandler in Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and the Politics reads The Ruined Cottage in terms of oral narrative. He argues that The Ruined Cottage "presents an oral tale told by an experienced father figure to an immature son figure for the purposes of passing on appropriate moral habits from the former to the latter" (161). He claims that this type of social organization, paternalist-traditionalist, is the ideal "plainly upheld in The Ruined Cottage and demonstrably implied in all the mature poetry into which Wordsworth admits the concerns of society" (265). Chandler explores the effects that telling such a tale has on the listener (127-30), suggesting that revisions to The Ruined Cottage between January and March of 1798 (the verse biography of the Pedlar and an addendum) make it much more than a simple tale: "No longer just a natural tale, the poem becomes an illustration of what it means to tell a natural tale--how such a story is produced, how it is received, and what difference its telling makes to speaker and listener" (130). For Chandler's purposes, 1798 is a pivotal year (xvii); for mine, 1798 is only the beginning of what was to become The Excursion, a beginning which was repeatedly revised for public consumption.

My interest in these revisions centres around the excess of significance created by the discourses within and surrounding the tale of Margaret. Tilottama Rajan has observed that the text of Book I "includes a subtext which can be used to take it apart," where the subtext, Margaret's tale, has chronological priority over the Pedlar's biography (Dark 22). She argues that "This peculiar coexistence of one discourse with another that radically contradicts it can be explained only as a result of inconsistent views of how poetry ought to represent the world it depicts" (Dark 22). She identifies "The naturalistic narrative of 'The Ruined Cottage'" with "the belief that poetry should be mimetic" (Dark 22-23), while claiming that "the psychological biography of the Pedlar is written with a sense that the function of a narrator is correctively to idealize experience by pretending to be innocent of it" (Dark 23). While I certainly agree that Book I, like the rest of The Excursion, demonstrates both mimetic and idealizing tendencies, in fact often tries to promote each at the expense of both, I do not believe that it is possible to classify the tale of Margaret as a naturalistic subtext of Book I.[2]

In the next chapter I will examine the relationship between the first part of Book I with the tale of Margaret in terms of exemplary biographies; here, I am primarily concerned with the tale itself in the context of Book I. Book I also has a composition history considerably more complex than many other parts of The Excursion. Briefly, The Ruined Cottage was written in 1797 and a new ending added in 1798; the verse biography of the Pedlar was added, subtracted, and later added again. It eventually became Book I of The Excursion; however, Wordsworth continued to revise parts of Book I in the various published editions of The Excursion, especially those lines that form transitions between the tale of Margaret and the frame. I argue that these lines isolate the tale by drawing attention to the conventions of narrative even as they bridge this isolation by offering one model of response.

The theme of isolation is developed throughout the tale. As in the Matron's tale, the cottage is described so as to emphasize its isolation: it is the "'lonely hut'" (1.508), the "'lonely Cottage'" (1.568) which reflects the isolation and eventual ruin of the "'Last human tenant of these ruined walls!'" (1.916). Yet this cottage faces a public road (1.503) and is fairly close to a village, since the Poet and the Wanderer could leave the cottage just before sunset and reach a village-inn "ere the stars were visible" (1.969). In a move repeated throughout The Excursion, most obviously perhaps with the not-so-solitary Solitary, the effect of isolation is constructed through the details emphasized in the narration, even though other, potentially contradictory, details are presented in passing. With the tale of Margaret, this strategy involves the removal of a community in order to emphasize her isolation from all human community, living or dead. For if she died alone in a ruined hut, she is also "'forgotten in the quiet grave'" (1.510). The Calvinist Wanderer cannot even leave her in her grave to await resurrection with the chosen but speculates

"on One
By sorrow laid asleep; or borne away,
A human being destined to awake
To human life, or something very near
To human life, when he shall come again
For whom she suffered." (1.785-790)

Even in an "afterlife," Margaret is separated from all others, because, biblical echoes aside, the "he" who shall come again has nothing to do with Christian faith. In the 1845 and 1849 versions of The Excursion, Wordsworth has the Wanderer proclaim Margaret's reliance on Christian faith, a revision I shall examine more closely later in this chapter as I look at the various attempts at closure. At this earlier point in the tale, however, the Wanderer separates Margaret from the overarching community of Christianity in all published versions.[3]

A more immediate community also seems denied to Margaret, though close reading shows that she necessarily took part in this community, a community based upon economic necessity. In published versions, her eldest son is apprenticed to a local farmer, a improvement in station from

MS. B where he is a Parish apprentice (405). But by apprenticing out her own child, Margaret must hire another child to help her spin hemp (1.861), transactions which implicate her in a market economy. Margaret is a member, albeit an impoverished one, of an economic community.

And yet the tale of Margaret is structured around absences, deepening the impression of isolation. The most obvious absence is, of course, Robert's, yet as the tale progresses, other absences become noticeable. Margaret's children disappear one by one (1.760; 1.856), she is not at the cottage when the Wanderer arrives (1.711), and finally the Wanderer himself is absent for the end of her story (1.870). Though he only hears of her death after the fact, he passes on images of her staring into the distance, entreating strangers, and dying alone in a decaying house. The final absence is that of memory, for the Wanderer insists that "'Even of the good is no memorial left'" (1.474). She is forgotten, except for the Wanderer who can see "'Things which you cannot see'" (1.470), and whoever told the Wanderer the rest of the tale, and a community which does not rely on monuments for remembrance (6.610-

615), and the Poet who mentions her again in Book VI just to prove he has not forgotten (6.1060), and finally readers who have demonstrated over the past hundred and eighty years that the tale of Margaret is one section of The Excursion not easily forgotten.

So, given the fact that Margaret is not forgotten either within or outside of the fictional world created in The Excursion, why is there this emphasis on forgetting? If, as I have suggested, being forgotten is another form of isolation, this emphasis on the absence of memory becomes clearer. Margaret is isolated because, as the abandoned woman, she is supposed to be isolated. She is further isolated by the fact that, unlike the common seduced and abandoned maid, she is both wife and widow (1.874). As Galperin notes, "While Margaret may have resigned herself to widowhood, she never relinquishes her role as Robert's wife, nor does the object of her desire and her only measure of completeness ever change" ("Then" 359). Necessarily incomplete because Robert is absent, she nevertheless is characterized by excess: "'Tender and deep in her excess of love'" (1.514). Kenneth Johnston argues that Margaret's pathos is "sexually reinforced" (47). Not only does she accost travellers with "'many a fond enquiry'" (1.892), but "'no one came / But he was welcome; no one went away / but that it seemed she loved him'" (1.505-507). I am not suggesting that Margaret is a merry widow scandalizing the countryside with her sexual excess; indeed, it would be hard to think of a less merry widow. But Margaret is figured in such a way that her desire and the emotional effect of her desire on people who hear her tale exceed acceptable bounds. What better reason could there be to impose bounds upon her tale, to isolate her and to control the potentially unsettling tale? In the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth warns of the power of words to disrupt the accustomed order of ideas and feelings:

> If the words . . . by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. (147)

Behind Wordsworth's criticism of the "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" ("Preface" 129, 131) is the assumption that such bounds should not be traversed. After all, we are told that merely to repeat the story of Margaret for emotional titillation is "'a wantonness'" (1.626). That the story is repeated at all, let alone with such effect, is presented as evidence of "'A power to virtue friendly'" (1.634); I suggest it is evidence of the power of the thematic and formal strategies used to isolate Margaret, or at least to construct the illusion of isolation.

While the theme of isolation is made concrete through various devices on the level of content in Book I: absence, forgetfulness, a decaying cottage, etc., it is also developed through concretization of what Alexander Zholkovsky has called the code-sphere, those elements which "under the normal convention of language and plot, are considered irrelevant for the signified." (Themes 219). Zholkovsky argues that

> code-sphere CONCRS [concretizations] are, on the one hand, more striking, and original than

> 'normal,' referential CONCRS--since establishing iconic similarity between thematic elements and units of expression plane is a difficult and spectacular artistic feat. On the other hand, these CONCRS are 'swallowed' by the reader almost imperceptibly, subliminally, as something that goes without saying: by virtue of the automatism of the practical language, their connection with the theme is not perceived explicitly--they are, after all, purely 'formal' and 'meaningless.'" (Themes 220)

I will argue that the divisions within the tale of Margaret make the theme of isolation concrete precisely because Wordsworth is trying to disrupt the automatism of language, the conventions of telling tales, by drawing attention to the boundaries of narrative. Viktor Šklovskij describes disruption of the automatism of language as defamiliarization or "making strange." He argues that "The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (12). Victor Erlich notes that Šklovskij was certainly not the first to recognize the aesthetic value of defamiliarization and cites both Wordsworth and Coleridge (179). Indeed, in the "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" Wordsworth claims that one of his principle objects is "to throw over them [the poems] a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect" (123). I will argue that Wordsworth attempts a similar effect throughout The Excursion.[4] Specifically in the tale of Margaret, he draws attention to the boundaries between layers of narrative produced by the narrative frames surrounding the tale. Later in this chapter, I will examine how a model of response at the tale's conclusion is used both to reinforce and to bridge Margaret's carefully constructed isolation, but first I want to explore the apparent arbitrariness of the division between line 604 and line 605 in the tale.

This division would be easy enough to find without line numbers, as it is only place within the tale of Margaret where the lines of poetry are separated by a long dash.

Another dash occurs between lines 433 and 434 in Book I.[5] Both dashes interrupt the narrative. The first break divides the narrative past, the Wanderer's history, from the narrative present, which includes the tale of Margaret's past. The second division is harder to explain in terms of function, unless, as I will argue, it is seen as a way to force the reader to notice the narrative conventions. Before this division, the Wanderer introduces the tale of Margaret and describes her life with her husband. The division could be read as another marker between narrative past, Margaret and her husband, and the narrative 'present' of Margaret alone. But the division does not occur in what would be the most logical spot, between Margaret's speech and the Wanderer's silence (1.591). The Wanderer does not remain silent for long; indeed, he speaks for twelve more lines before the division. Only after the break, does the Poet finish off his narration of the Wanderer's speech with the tag line "He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone" (1.605). The break draws attention to the Poet's role as narratee as well as narrator, thereby raising issues of reliability as readers try to decide how far to follow his reaction to the tale of Margaret.

What the Wanderer spoke with such a solemn tone, however, is not the tale of Margaret but his doubts about telling such a tale and his affective response to the tale:

> "Why should a tear be on an old Man's cheek?
> Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,
> And in the weakness of humanity,
> From natural wisdom turn our hearts away;
> To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears;
> And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb
> The calm of nature with our restless thoughts?"
> (1.598-604)

The Wanderer queries the suitability of affective response in terms which seem to privilege calmness over the turmoil brought about by memory. Susan Wolfson notes that "The questions in The Excursion concentrate with a particular urgency on tale-telling and tale-listening" (The Questioning 96), and certainly these questions, given additional intensity by their location immediately before a graphic break, concentrate on what it means to tell a story about a "forgotten" woman. Wolfson argues that "The Wanderer's powers of narration at once evoke sympathy and provoke questions about its potentially errant motions, even as the question as a whole implies a desired order of response, an ideal standard of reading" (The Questioning 98-99). Wolfson goes on to characterize the questions as a "disquieting comment on what it means to achieve natural wisdom and to possess its comfort" (The Questioning 99). I am also concerned with the disquieting effect of abruptly separating questions from questioner, tale from its tellers, especially when such a division appears designed to reinforce forgetfulness.

This forgetfulness is evident in the disjunction in the characters' emotional states before and after the division. The Wanderer's solemnity, his tears, and his provocative questions are all one side of the division. After the division, he displays

> a look so mild,
> That for a little time is stole away
> All recollection; and that simple tale

> Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound.
>
> (1.607-10)

It is possible that time is needed for the tale to trigger an appropriate affective response in the hearer, but this response still takes the form of forgetting. The Poet does eventually remember Margaret and beg for the rest of her tale, which the Wanderer, after appropriate cautions about the power of tales, supplies. But why is there a break for forgetfulness graphically inscribed in the text? One possibility is to create suspense, though the earlier line about Margaret being "'forgotten in the quiet grave'" (1.510) hardly leaves the end of the tale in much doubt; another is to provide emotional release, but Margaret's individual tragedy, a fate worse than the common misfortune of the "'shoals of artisans'" (1.559) has not yet been described. Yet another possibility is that the break is intended to teach the reader something. I suggest that the division isolates the tale of Margaret and the Wanderer's affective response from the act of telling the tale. In the process, it foregrounds the artifice involved in such a "simple" (1.609) and "homely" (1.615) tale. After all, it is the Wanderer's narration, rather than unmediated memories of Margaret, that affects the Poet and the reader. As if to emphasize this fact, the Poet explains that the Wanderer

> had rehearsed
> Her homely tale with such familiar power,
> With such an active countenance, an eye
> So busy, that the things of which he spake
> Seemed present. (1.614-618)

The Poet reports his response to the reported plight of Margaret as the reader encounters layer after layer of narration. Thus, the division and interlude function as a reminder of the narrative layers and the narrative conventions which contribute to affective response to tales. The Poet suggests that the tale acquires its power from the teller, and in a situation with so many tellers, so many layers of narrative, such a suggestion foregrounds the constructed nature of the narrative.

In the space created by this division, the space of forgetfulness, the Wanderer describes the tale of Margaret as

> "a common tale,

An ordinary sorrow of man's life,
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed
In bodily form." (1.636-39)

Yet, it is hardly a common tale or an ordinary sorrow, a point repeatedly made through the strategies of isolation. It is hardly a tale of silent suffering either, considering the number of tellers, including Margaret herself, who break the silence. Yet even as the division isolates the tale by foregrounding the layers of narrative, it also allows the bridging of these layers through affective response. After all, the Poet is able to empathize with the Wanderer's attachment to Margaret: "I thought of that poor Woman as of one / Whom I had known and loved" (1.613-14). Readers may be forced to encounter the constructed nature of the Poet's response, may be forced to acknowledge the roles that the form and style of the Wanderer's narration play in such a response, but they may very well experience an affective response to the tale. Indeed, the reception history, especially the current preoccupation with this tale in its earlier versions, suggests that readers do find the tale of Margaret affecting. This affective response is contingent upon Margaret's isolation, since the isolation based on her obscurity, "'forgotten in the quiet grave'" (1.510), makes her memorable.

The Wanderer's attempts to conclude the tale demonstrate a similar dynamic: the tale of Margaret achieves significance through closure but resists this closure. That Wordsworth found it difficult to end this tale is evident from the number of times he revised the conclusion. MS. B ends with Margaret's death in the cottage: "'In sickness she remained, and here she died, / Last human tenant of these ruined walls'" (DC MS. 17 527-28), but this abrupt conclusion to the narrative did not satisfy Wordsworth for long. MS B also reveals two rejected drafts of the conclusion and an addendum to the conclusion.[6] By MS. D the Poet's reaction and the Wanderer's advice about how to react had been added. I would like to examine the revisions of this ending here, for in Wordsworth's inability to leave it alone I see both a desire to enshrine the tale of Margaret as paradigm for imaginative experience and a desire to destroy such isolation in order to allow other forms of experience. The Poet's emotional response is based upon imaginative identification. Ending the tale with the stark image of Margaret alone encourages the same sort of affective response in the reader, but that conclusion does not foreground the social context of narrative, the social function of narrative. Promoting sympathy for another may well be a social act, but Wordsworth was evidently uncomfortable with the lack of moral guidance in the Poet's excess of sorrow.

Along with minor tinkering, Wordsworth made significant revisions to the conclusion once the poem was already published. The most obvious of these changes is the explicitly religious context added to the 1845 version of The Excursion. Suddenly, Margaret is made to feel

> "The unbounded might of prayer; and [learn], with soul
> Fixed on the Cross, that consolation springs,
> From sources deeper far than deepest pain,
> For the meek Sufferer." (1.936-39)

A copy of Wordsworth's Poetical Works 1836-7, used for revision and re-drafting, contains a variant of this pious sentiment; in it, the Wanderer admonishes the Poet to "Doubt not that oft-times in her soul she felt / The unbounded might of prayer. Upon her knees / Was taught that heavenly consolation springs" and so on (De Selincourt app. crit. 39). Jonathan Wordsworth suggests that this new emphasis on Christianity is Wordsworth's response to Christopher North's attack on the lack of religion in Book I (Music 26). He then argues that these lines are

> a denial of his [Wordsworth's] original tragic intuitions; but had Margaret been shown from the first as finding religious consolation, there could have been no tragedy. The Ruined Cottage would have been just another touching example of faith, like Ellen's story in Excursion Book VI. (Music 27)

I will argue in Chapter Seven that indeed the story of Margaret has much in common with that of Ellen, not the least of which is the presentation of highly popular versions of abandoned women. That Margaret should eventually be given Christian attributes, especially in response to public criticism, is part of a general strategy of representation in The Excursion. I believe the revisions are used to deflect criticism from a tale that deliberately disappoints expectations. Margaret does not behave as an abandoned wife and mother should. She neglects her children, a point which caused contemporary middle class reviewers considerable uneasiness.[7] She also lingers an unseemly time, even after her children are gone, and dies, not from a broken heart, but from the damp (1.907-10). Adding religion makes this more than conventional figure more acceptable; however, it does not make the tale any easier to conclude.

Once the Wanderer has finished describing Margaret's end as the "'Last human tenant of these ruined walls'" (1.916), the Poet rises, turns away, and reflects: "with a brother's love / I blessed her in the impotence of grief" (1.922-24). An echo of these lines can be found in the Christabel notebook, DC MS. 15, part of what became the discharged soldier episode of Book IV of The Prelude:

> A short while
> I held discourse on things indifferent
> And casual matter like a man who feels

> The half-complacence of a willing heart
> The impotence of pity. (6^r)

Echoes of these lines can also be heard after the division between the second and third parts of Book I where the Poet forgets Margaret: "A while on trivial things we held discourse" (1.611). With these echoes, the possibility of forgetfulness is already inscribed in the moment when the Poet reviews Margaret's sufferings. For both grief and pity are indeed impotent, a point the Wanderer hurries to make. William Howard suggests the Poet's reaction can be divided into three stages: simple grief, satisfaction through emotional concentration, and the ability to place his reaction in a larger context (515); this reaction, however, is not good enough for the Wanderer who insists: "'enough to sorrow you have given, / The purposes of wisdom ask no more'" (1.932-33) and, with the 1845 edition, launches into Christian consolation.

What is not usually noted about the revisions to the conclusion in the 1845 text is that along with the superimposed piety comes a question. From MS. D of The Ruined Cottage right through the 1843 edition of The

Excursion, the Wanderer admonishes the Poet to "'Be wise and chearful, and no longer read / The forms of things with an unworthy eye'" (DC MS. 16 510-511); for the 1845 edition, Wordsworth changed these lines to "'Why then should we read / The forms of things with an unworthy eye?'" (1.939-40). The question is, of course, rhetorical as it follows the Wanderer's claim that Margaret found consolation through religion, but even as the answer is implied, the question form undermines its own assumptions because this consolation is not entirely convincing to many readers. Like the Wanderer's earlier questions about utility of emotional response, "Why should a tear be on an old Man's cheek?" (1.598), this question contains within it the conditions of its own denial. Why not read the forms of things with an unworthy eye, and what makes the eye unworthy anyway?

The Wanderer goes on to offer an example of reading with a worthy eye, the famous, or infamous, spear-grass image. Jonathan Wordsworth examines the vegetation imagery in The Music of Humanity, and I will not rehearse his argument here, except to note that he believes the spear-grass passage provides a "summing-up of the wisdom" of The Ruined Cottage (117). He argues that

> Margaret's assimilation in the finished poem is tolerable because it is the logical end of a process that has been going on throughout. And Wordsworth's means of putting it across is successful because by this stage one has come to expect that the mention of a weed or flower will have far more than its surface importance. (117)

Alan Liu also notes the importance ascribed to this image of spear-grass silvered over by rain but argues that there is "something shockingly dehumanizing about imagery" (320). He associates his unease with Margaret's subjectivity: "When persons such as Margaret become patterns in an imagery wholly distanced from normal human concerns, equanimity in the face of suffering seems inhuman" (322). Liu's protest points to the transformation Margaret undergoes in the process of the telling of the tale. She moves from being represented by an icon, the broken bowl (1.493), to being a "person" capable of provoking emotional response. Through their fascination with the plight of Margaret, many readers, including Liu, resist attempts to transform her back into an image or icon.

I share this reluctance to reduce Margaret to the status of icon, but I also resist a similar movement to transform Book I of The Excursion back into The Ruined Cottage. With the tale of Margaret, Wordsworth moves beyond the type of the unfortunate woman done so many times before, though the tale may indeed have started out that way.[8] Margaret's excess works towards individuation as her experience, and its social implications, cannot be neatly contained within an appeal to pathos. Wordsworth's interest, even in the earliest versions of this tale, is not in criticizing poor laws or a society where sickness means the disintegration of a family; the details are still there, but they are not foregrounded. Instead, Wordsworth appears primarily interested in the emotional effects of Margaret's tale, repeatedly insisting that pathos is not enough. As Wordsworth explains in his "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface," "the pathetic participates of an animal sensation" (82) but there is

> a meditative, as well as a human, pathos; an enthusiastic, as well as an ordinary, sorrow; a sadness that has its seat in the depths of reason, to which the mind cannot sink gently of itself--but to which it must descend by treading the steps of thought. (82-83)

W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser suggest that Wordsworth here draws upon John Dennis' distinction between poetic passion that is enthusiastic and poetic passion that is ordinary (104-05). Wordsworth himself cites the tale of Margaret, along with those of the Solitary and Ellen, as instances of "ordinary or popular passion" in a letter to Catherine Clarkson dated January 1815 (190). Still, even a tale of such ordinary passion proves remarkably difficult to conclude. His difficulties concluding the tale of Margaret, in stating exactly what response is enough, point to the importance of the other eight books of The Excursion. After all, as William Howard notes about the closing image of the two men leaving together,

> Viewed as the conclusion to a self-contained poem, this passage implies much that its critical

> tradition has found in it: a sense of satisfaction arising from matured insight blessed by an atmosphere of natural benevolence. But in the first book of a much longer poem, these implications require verification in the light of ensuing action, must be evaluated in the context of future responses to similar situations. (517)

I will examine the suitability of such modelled responses in subsequent chapters. But for now, I would like to note the tale's excess and Book I's refusal of the easy closure that ending with "'Last human tenant of these ruined wall'" (1.916) would offer.

Even as the tale foregrounds the theme of isolation, it complicates its iconic status by crossing the borders it has worked so hard at constructing. Both Margaret and the tale keep escaping enclosures through excess, excessive individuation and excessive narration. Even as the tale of Margaret emphasizes the absence of memory, it is still the most remembered tale; indeed, if I can cross the boundaries between textual and extratextual realities for a moment, one of the most obvious concretizations of isolation is the critical privileging of The Ruined Cottage. But to forget the other tales of The Excursion is "'a wantonness'" (1.626) that denies the usefulness of the poetry in favour of emotional indulgence. Both Percy Bysshe Shelley and Thomas Peacock picked up on the theme of isolation in The Excursion; both criticized its value to society.[9] But if, as Fiona J. Stafford has suggested in relation to Wordsworth's "Essay, Supplementary to the Preface" (1815), Wordsworth was appalled by the glorification of isolation and decay evident in the works of Ossian (59), I suggest that it is unlikely he intended a similar effect. I cannot judge the usefulness of The Excursion for Wordsworth's age; I can, however, argue for its usefulness in our age, precisely because its significance keeps slipping out of the neat enclosures built by the poem and its readers. The tale of Margaret is one such enclosure, the tale of the Wanderer another.

Notes

1. In "Questioning 'The Romantic Ideology': Wordsworth," Susan Wolfson challenges McGann's tendency "to ignore the complex rhetorical moods of literary texts and their capacity for critical self-consciousness" (430), but she does so by focusing primarily on *The Ruined Cottage* rather than *The Excursion*. She does note that Book I of *The Excursion* contains the "potentially compromising biography" of the Wanderer (433). I examine the biography of the Wanderer in Chapter Three.

2. Thomas De Quincey certainly did not consider the tale of Margaret to be mimetic or naturalistic; he protested that the tale was unbelievable: "Even for a romance it will not do, far less for a philosophic poem, dealing with intense realities" ("On Wordsworth's" 409).

3. Margaret refers to her own prayers (401) as early as MS B (1798); how much comfort she received from them is, of course, open to debate.

4. I do not believe, however, that defamiliarization is the only effect Wordsworth strives for in The Excursion; in Chapter Six I will examine its opposite, algebrization.

5. In the early manuscript versions of The Ruined Cottage the division within the tale of Margaret is already observed while both divisions can be found in those manuscripts which include the Pedlar's biography with the tale of Margaret. The only other dash in The Excursion occurs in Book VI immediately before the tale of Ellen, another abandoned and isolated woman.

6. The passage begins with the lines "Not useless do I deem / These quiet sympathies with things that hold / An inarticulate language" on 46^r and continues through 52^r "she drew / Herself, new energies, resistless force." Part of this rejected conclusion was later used in Book IV of The Excursion (4.1207-1298). John Alban Finch has suggested that this new ending may have caused Wordsworth to remove what later became the Wanderer's history from The Ruined Cottage since "What the Pedlar said here bore close relation

neither to his tale of Margaret nor to his character as Wordsworth had so far portrayed it" (24).

7. Thomas De Quincey argues that an inquest should have been held for her baby who obviously died from neglect ("On Wordsworth's" 409); Margaret Oliphant insists that "no such woman, unless she had been carried away by some swift destruction which she could not resist, would have fallen into the wild recklessness of lonely wanderings, leaving behind her 'a solitary infant'" (323). See also The Augustan Review 1 (1815): 343-356.

8. Wordsworth himself created a whole gallery of unfortunate women, including the Female Vagrant, Ruth, another Margaret from "The Affliction of Margaret," and Martha Ray, to name only a few.

9. Shelley's "Alastor: Or, the Spirit of Solitude" is often read as an answer to Wordsworth's Excursion; see Yvonne M. Carothers' "Alastor: Shelley Corrects Wordsworth." Modern Language Quarterly 42.1 (1981): 21-47. Peacock's Melincourt

also contains allusions to The Excursion, and Book I in particular. He mocks elegant philosophers who enjoy beggars in picturesque rags and ruined cottages in "harmonizing tints of moss, mildew, and stonecrop" (432).

Chapter 3:

"like a Being made of many Beings": Exemplification and the Wanderer

I have argued that the tale of Margaret exceeds the enclosures designed to deflect criticism from the tale, but the tale of Margaret is not the first to display such a dynamic, nor is it the most problematic of the embedded narratives in The Excursion. The tale of the Wanderer as told in Book I presents its own challenge to readers' expectations. The tale of the Wanderer exceeds the limits imposed upon it in Book I in part because of the narrative situation. After all, the Wanderer is one of the main characters in The Excursion; the Poet reports the experiences, sentiments, and reactions of the Wanderer in both the narrative past and present. The Poet also allows the Wanderer to expand the narrative past revealed in Book I into later parts of The Excursion, as when the Wanderer echoes the Poet's description of a sunrise from the Wanderer's youth (1.197-218; 4.109-122).[1] Indeed the other books of The Excursion could be read as providing examples for the character of the Wanderer as outlined in Book I.

In this chapter I will suggest that Wordsworth challenged his polite reading public to identify with a character from outside of their social milieu, with a pedlar in fact. This identification involves a pattern of interaction that Hans Robert Jauss has called an admiring modality, where "Admiring identification . . . involves a perfect hero whose actions are exemplary for a community or a segment of the community" (Holub 79). Of course, such identification does not imply "passive adoption of an idealized pattern of behavior" (Jauss Aesthetic 94). In looking at the Wanderer's tale in Book I, I suggest that while his tale acts as an exemplary biography, resistance to his example informs Book I and the rest of The Excursion. In this chapter I will first explore the social implications of using a pedlar as a moral example before examining strategies used by Wordsworth both to grant and to undermine the exemplary status of the Wanderer.

The reception of the Wanderer indicates a certain resistance on the part of many readers to this character, though for apparently different reasons. Modern distaste for the detachment of a character who "could *afford* to suffer / With those whom he saw suffer" (1.370-71) may not seem to have much in common with contemporary reactions against the Wanderer's vulgar occupation, but these different aesthetic judgements could mask a similar discomfort. Contemporary reviewers had difficulty accepting a figure who worked as a pedlar dispensing philosophical wisdom; modern critics have problems with a figure who comments upon the struggle to survive apparently without struggling himself. Francis Jeffrey concludes his review of *The Excursion* with a long harangue on the absurdity of making the Wanderer a pedlar:

> What but the most wretched affectation, or provoking perversity of taste could induce any one to place his chosen advocate of wisdom and virtue in so absurd and fantastic a condition? Did Mr. Wordsworth really imagine, that his favourite doctrines were likely to gain any thing in point

> of effect or authority by being put into the mouth of a person accustomed to higgle about tape, or brass sleeve-buttons? Or is it not plain that, independent of the ridicule and disgust which such a personification must excite in many of his readers, its adoption exposes his work throughout to the charge of revolting incongruity, and utter disregard of probability or nature? (468-69)

Jeffrey's revulsion is triggered by social status but defended in specifically aesthetic terms: the Wanderer's identity as a pedlar is a symptom of "perversity of taste." I have quoted Jeffrey at length, though indeed he goes on for much longer in the same vein, because Jeffrey articulates a discomfort lurking in reactions to The Excursion through much of the nineteenth century. The reviewer for The British Critic sees Wordsworth as instinctively apologizing for disturbing "such [readers] as feel by rule" (457), not that the reviewer places himself in such company, but the company of a pedlar does not seem very palatable to him either. Coleridge in Biographia Literaria wonders why the "rank" of the Wanderer needed to be mentioned at all (396), an objection De Quincey answers in his own style; De Quincey suggests that the Wanderer's well-detailed past prevented the local constable from locking him up on suspicion of being a chicken thief or a resurrection man ("Criticisms" 432).[2]

In our century, the issue of the Wanderer as Pedlar has largely faded. Most who even bother to discuss the occupation of the Wanderer regard it, as De Quincey does, as a necessary fiction to allow the character to wander. Jonathan Wordsworth argues that "One accepts that [the Wanderer figure] is a pedlar for convenience only" (Music 93). In our distance from the Wanderer's occupation, however, we have largely failed to recognize the daring choices Wordsworth made in his representation of the Wanderer.

Alan Liu in Wordsworth: The Sense of History is one of the few modern critics to argue that "the specifically vocational status of peddling is crucial" in The Ruined Cottage (342). Liu sees the Pedlar as an illegitimate speculator in imagery: "he is the middleman, intertextual dealer, or interpreter of the text of 'humanity' who allows the debt or absent value of the text to be pocketed as 'riches' by that special economic other, the reader" (346). Liu claims that "instead of presenting [Margaret's] misfortune as a narrative or drama able to capitalize upon tragedy with traditional authority, Wordsworth peddles his tale as incipient lyric" (348). Liu's belief that The Ruined Cottage is "Generated along a series of short, haunting still lifes of imagery" (313), rather than along narrative or dramatic principles, is at odds with my emphasis on Wordsworth as a narrative poet in a social context.

But the vocation of the Wanderer is crucial; so too is the emphasis in the published versions of The Excursion on his retirement. I will explore the revisions of the Wanderer's career at a later point in this chapter; here I would like to draw attention to the social ambiguity of the pedlar, especially in retirement. In his notes to The Excursion, Wordsworth cites Heron's Journey in Scotland on the social status of the pedlar:

> It is not more than twenty or thirty years since a young man going from any part of Scotland to

> England, of purpose to carry the pack, was considered as going to lead the life and acquire the fortune of a gentleman. When, after twenty years' absence, in that honourable line of employment, he returned with his acquisitions to his native country, he was regarded as a gentleman to all intents and purposes.[3] (412)

The retired pedlar, Wordsworth suggests, is almost a gentleman, not by birth of course and not in the best circles perhaps, but "to all intents and purposes." I will suggest that, for Wordsworth's purposes, this potential gentility is essential, for in it lies the possibility of readers seeing the Wanderer as a model and thereby identifying with him.

But Wordsworth's view of the respectability of pedlars was controversial. E. Lipson in The Economic History of England notes that the Statute-book (1810) classifies pedlars and petty chapmen under the heading of rogues and vagabonds (421), and Alan Liu describes the concern about pedlars in the 1780s, as shopkeepers tried to persuade parliament to revoke the licenses of all pedlars in compensation for a new tax (344-45). Displaying the type of reaction which may have prompted Wordsworth to quote Heron at length when he revised the notes to The Excursion, Jeffrey mocks any connection between pedlars and gentlemen:

> A man who went about selling flannel and pocket-handkerchiefs in this lofty diction, would soon frighten away all his customers; and would infallibly pass either for a madman, or for some learned and affected gentleman, who, in a frolic, had taken up a character which he was peculiarly ill qualified for supporting. (469)

The Wanderer fails not only as a pedlar because of his diction, but also as a gentleman for he cannot even act the part of a pedlar well. The Wanderer's credibility is dismissed, hardly a tenable situation for a main character dispensing advice in a philosophic poem. Yet within this poem the Wanderer is described as having a mind "filled with inward light" (1.95). The Poet insists that "never did there live on earth / A man of kindlier nature" (1.414-15) and attributes his own creative efforts to a desire to record "some small portion of his [the Wanderer's] eloquent speech" (1.98). For the Wanderer is set forth as an exemplary figure, where exemplary means both commendable and serving as an example. But for readers to accept a character as an example requires a certain level of identification with that character, and for many readers such an identification with a pedlar was distasteful, if not impossible. With The Excursion Wordsworth takes the risk, and I believe a calculated one, of annoying those who could afford to buy it by assuming that they would be willing, and able, to identify with characters like the Wanderer.

Critics have not hesitated to identify Wordsworth with the Wanderer. As William Galperin notes, the Wanderer is "usually regarded as a mouthpiece for Wordsworth" (Revision 32). James Butler notes that the history of the Pedlar is Wordsworth's "first autobiographical work" (17) while Jonathan Wordsworth claims that "Wordsworth's actual experience was idealized and condensed so that the Pedlar could pass through successive stages of increasing awareness" (Music 221). Reeve Parker acknowledges that "Wordsworth may have been attempting, for the first time in a sustained way, to clarify his obscure understanding of his own development by giving it dramatic and narrative embodiment in the history of the wanderer" but cautions that "whatever the autobiographical relevance of the wanderer's history, the emphasis is on the basis it provides for his dramatic role in educating the narrator" (98).

Wordsworth was quite willing to identify with the figure of a pedlar, was even willing to acknowledge the existence of an actual pedlar in his extended family, at least in the semi-private forum of the Fenwick notes. In the Fenwick note to The Excursion Wordsworth explains that

> An individual named Patrick, by birth and education a Scotchman, followed this humble occupation for many years, and afterwards settled in the Town of Kendal. He married a kinswoman of my wife's, and her sister Sarah was brought up from early childhood under this good man's eye. (373-74)

Wordsworth goes on to cite a "Packman" he knew at school as another model, while critics have identified many other possible historical and literary models.[4] Wordsworth even muses about the possibility of his being a pedlar:

> had I been born in a class which would have deprived me of what is called a liberal education, it is not unlikely that, being strong in body, I should have taken to a way of life such as that in which my Pedlar passed the greater part of his days. At all events, I am here called upon freely to acknowledge that the character I have represented in his person is chiefly an idea of what I fancied my own character might have become in his circumstances. ("Fenwick" 373)

Wordsworth's identification with the Wanderer is contingent upon a recognition of differences in class and education. The subjunctive "had I been born" carries within it its own negation; of course he was not born in such a class, of course he was not denied a liberal education. While The Excursion may promote universal education, it certainly does not advocate the dissolution of class barriers.

Wordsworth's willingness to make this imaginative identification, however qualified and tentative it may be, with a member of a profession considered disreputable by many, is remarkable. Perhaps this willingness might partially explain why Wordsworth assumed other people would also accept that the former occupation of the Wanderer.

Part of Wordsworth's imaginative identification with the Wanderer, however, was based upon information which his original audience could not have had. For the childhood of the Wanderer bears striking resemblances to the childhood Wordsworth constructs for himself in The Prelude. Lines originally intended for The Prelude found their way into The Excursion, as in the description of the Wanderer as minstrel which opens Book II (M. Reed 646), while passages about the pedlar "could be mined for inclusion in The Prelude as the poet's own experiences" (James Butler 24).[5] As James Chandler notes, however, "the difference in circumstances was no doubt helpful in allowing Wordsworth to draw on his own experience at this trial stage without risking the charge of self-aggrandizement" (96).

While some passages are shifted from one poem to the other, still others occur in some form in both. The Wanderer of The Excursion, like the Wordsworth of The

Prelude, has little need of books, though each demonstrates a reverence for Milton and mathematics. Both are described as chosen ones of Nature; both experience something remarkable in a sunrise; both perceive the hills grow larger as they learn from Nature's severer ministries. In each case, childhood experience, strengthened by solitude and wandering, is a source of sensitivity and insight which can be drawn upon in adulthood but for different purposes. Episodes which are used to grant poetic authority in The Prelude grant moral authority in The Excursion. Jonathan Wordsworth argues, though, that

> here the resemblances between the two poems cease. The Pedlar perceives the presence of greatness long before his time, and Wordsworth is consciously idealizing; whereas in The Prelude memories of actual childhood conflict all too obviously with the poem's didactic purpose. (219)

Although I believe that Wordsworth is indeed consciously idealizing experience in The Prelude, I think Jonathan Wordsworth's insistence on the precociousness of the Wanderer's wisdom is important. The Wordsworth of The

Prelude requires a crisis of faith brought about by the French Revolution and a gradual recovery aided by domestic affection before he can attempt *The Prelude*. The Wanderer, on the other hand, merely needs to calm his restless heart by leaving home; indeed, his strength is based on the fact that "In his steady course / No piteous revolutions had he felt, / No wild varieties of joy and grief" (1.358-60). The phrases "no piteous revolutions" and "no wild varieties" balance each other even as they describe the Wanderer's balanced life, while the inversion adds a certain weight to the Wanderer's tranquillity.[6] For Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, childhood experience is a source of renewal in the face of "piteous revolutions" and is, as such, a source of poetic authority. For the Wanderer, childhood experience makes any such wild varieties of joy and grief in adulthood superfluous; his experience on lonely mountaintops as a youth is offered as self-evident reason for authority:

> there his spirit shaped
> Her prospects, nor did he believe,--he *saw*.
> What wonder if his being thus became
> Sublime and comprehensive! (1.231-34)

His perception makes him a poet sown by nature, "endowed with highest gifts, / The vision and the faculty divine; / Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse" (1:78-80). The Poet suggests that such natural poets do not learn how to write verse because of a lack "Of culture and the inspiring aid of books / Or haply by a temper too severe, / Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame" (1.83-85).

So although the Wanderer has developed "An active power to fasten images / Upon his brain" (1:145-46), he still needs an actual poet to record:

> some small portion of his eloquent speech,
> And something that may serve to set in view
> The feeling pleasures of his loneliness,
> His observations, and the thoughts his mind
> Had dealt with (1.98-102)

This record begins not with the Wanderer's amazing childhood, but with the Poet's. As a schoolboy, he became friends with the Wanderer who singled him out "For [his] grave looks, too thoughtful for [his] years" (1.59), a personality much like the Wanderer as a child. Only after claiming the special status of "chosen comrade" (1.61) for himself and natural poet for the Wanderer, does the Poet describe the Wanderer's history. This framework ensures an exemplary context for the Wanderer's tale, and without this context Wordsworth could not be sure that anyone would care about the life of a pedlar. I will explore in further detail the similarities between the Poet and the Wanderer later in this chapter. Indeed I will argue that the Pedlar figure becomes increasingly idealized through his various incarnations, until as the Wanderer he can, or so Wordsworth assumes, stand for a poet, a figure with which the Poet and Wordsworth himself could identify.

One detail that survives from the earliest versions of the Pedlar's tale through the 1850 edition of The Excursion is the young boy's choice of reading material: "The life and death of Martyrs, who sustained / Intolerable pangs" in MS. E. (DC MS. 37: 166-67). This line is quickly expanded to include the Scottish context: "Intolerable pangs, the Records left / Of Persecution and the Covenant, times/ That like an echo ring through Scotland still" (DC MS. 44: 192-94). This sentiment survives, with slight variations, in all subsequent versions; I suggest that it had to survive because in these lines Wordsworth was not only identifying the reading habits that helped to shape the Wanderer's character, but also gesturing toward the reading habits he hoped to foster with The Excursion. I do not claim that The Excursion contains the lives and deaths of martyrs who suffered for some greater purpose; indeed, part of the difficulty with The Excursion is that the deaths of characters in the embedded tales often do not seem to serve any purpose, a point I will explore in Chapter Seven. However The Excursion does operate, particularly in the tale of the Wanderer, along principles of exemplary biography.

"The life and death of martyrs" may allude to one such popular model of exemplary biography, John Foxe's Acts and Monuments, originally published in the sixteenth century but frequently reprinted. Linda Colley notes that Foxe's text experienced a new wave of popularity in the eighteenth century when it was repackaged to reach a larger audience. It was issued in thirty-one, then sixty, and finally eighty instalments until "together with the Bible and a handful of almanacs, it came to be one of the few books that one might plausibly expect to find in even a working-class household" (Colley 26).[7] But it was not merely working class readers who were influenced by the work of John Foxe or the model of exemplary biography his lives and deaths of martyrs offered. In the preface to Ecclesiastical Biography: or, Lives of Eminent Men, a book both Dorothy and William Wordsworth read and apparently enjoyed,[8] Christopher Wordsworth praises Foxe's Acts and Monuments (xix). I am not suggesting that Christopher Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography served as a direct model for Wordsworth's treatment of the Wanderer; after all, while Ecclesiastical Biography was published five years before The Excursion, the Wanderer's biography dates from much earlier. But exemplary biographies like those presented in Foxe's Acts and Monuments and Christopher Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography were a popular moral and educational phenomenon in the early nineteenth century.

Contributing to this popularity was the growth of methodist autobiography in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. T. B. Shepherd notes that John Wesley began soliciting the life stories of his travelling preachers for The Arminian Magazine in 1778. These autobiographies were popular enough to be collected and published in 1837 as The Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers (Shepherd 143). Joseph W. Reed argues that in accord with the growing Evangelical movement in Britain, biography was gradually stripped of "all the elements which attracted 'low curiosity'" (33). The early nineteenth century thus saw a "wave of biographical works devoted to the notably obscure" including

> worthy curates and rectors, their pious and zealous wives, principal secretaries of missionary societies, the mothers of esteemed memory, and the clouds of witness rising from the untimely graves of the children of happy memory, and equally happy death. (Joseph Reed 23)

As Brian Maidment suggests, "The genre attempted to democratize spirituality and concentrated on the goodness of lives lived by the humble and unacknowledged rather than on the examples of the famous" (148). The tale of a wise and pious pedlar is only one step further down the road of good intentions. Reed suggests that the rise of mass production and readership led to a concern for the "unformed minds" of these new readers and a resurgence of the exemplary principle in biography; he argues that

> Literature could be of service to the unformed minds of these readers only if it was grounded in a firm foundation of morality which would give direction to its examples, a universal significance--and perhaps a moral--to its conclusions. (Joseph Reed 27).

What happens when the universal significance or the moral does not appear to fit the examples is not an issue for Reed in his discussion of exemplary biographies; it is an issue for me in my discussion of the exemplary principle in the Wanderer's tale and The Excursion.

Mary Sirridge suggests that exemplification in a literary work is the creation of labels which denote the work, thus "determining that message is not a matter of ascertaining what the work denotes--its semantic properties --but of choosing a label which denotes it" (391). She argues that "generality and underspecification is exactly what we should expect if the relationship between a work and its message is a relationship between an object and a label or description of it" (399). Even as a label necessarily omits certain features, exemplary biography necessarily omits certain experiences even as it purports to be a true representation of a life. One way of labelling a life is through the trope of antonomasia or substitute naming.

Eric C. Walker identifies Wordsworth's use of antonomasia in the prose "Memoir of the Rev. Robert Walker" (1820). The Reverend Walker actually appears earlier, though unnamed, in Book VII of The Excursion as the minister known as "the WONDERFUL" (7.344-45), the proper name being replaced by the epithet (Walker 338). Walker suggests that "As a biographical trope, antonomasia enables Wordsworth to replace the sign of individuality, the proper name with signs--epithets, offices, appellatives--that point to human character" (331-32). What Walker does not address, however, is how prevalent this strategy is in The Excursion, where hardly anybody appears to have a name, or why this technique might have been so attractive to Wordsworth given his compulsive naming of names elsewhere.[9] Of course, Wordsworth was not the only one to use the trope of antonomasia in relation to The Excursion. Charles Lamb tries to avoid the whole issue of the Wanderer's vocation by substitution, a strategy used to very different effect by Jeffrey who consistently refers to the Wanderer as the Pedlar.

I believe Wordsworth utilizes the trope of antonomasia because it is particularly apt for exemplification. Antonomasia has the power to isolate a trait worthy of emulation or deserving of avoidance; it can thus be a powerful tool for characterization in an exemplary text. So the Wanderer, already known by an avocation, can also be referred to as Friend and venerable Sage. Whether or not the reader is intended to accept these appellatives without question is an issue I will examine at the end of this chapter. But it seems clear that the epithets are designed to heighten the moral authority of the Wanderer, authority created by the Poet through the tale of the Wanderer's childhood. The Wanderer becomes an exemplum whose character can be represented as a series of laudatory appellatives.

But what does it mean for a character to be an exemplum? Exemplification is one type of concretization where thematic entities are given specificity and form. Exemplification thus involves an increased level of specificity by the addition of a property to create a particular instance, or by attention to a property inherent in the entity (Shcheglov 51). But even as exemplification involves this sort of concretization, it also implies that concrete experience can be generalized beyond the specific instance, that the individual case can represent many.

Exemplification thus has narrative implications in terms of frequency, where frequency is "the numerical relationship between the events in the fabula and those in the story" (Bal 77).[10] Exemplification implies an iterative presentation at odds with its tendency towards concretization. Seymour Chatman describes iteration as "a single discoursive representation of several story moments" (78). Mieke Bal distinguishes between generalizing, external, and what she calls "normal" iteration (78-79). Generalizing iteration is concerned with facts which also exist outside the fabula and thus comes "very close to situation-descriptions" while external iteration concerns events which "are related to a specific fabula but which exceed its time span" (Bal 78). Although Bal does not define "normal" iteration, presumably she means a series of identical events occurring within the time span of the fabula but presented only once. The treatment of the Wanderer in Book I involves all three types of iteration: generalizing--the book of martyrs which could have been on many ministers' shelves (1.171-72); external--"The rough sports / And teasing ways of children vexed not him" (1.415-16) though no such teasing occurs in the published versions of the poem; "normal"--the presentation of the Wanderer's childhood, for, as Jonathan Wordsworth notes about _The Pedlar_, the tale of the Wanderer's youth "is written in terms of habitual experience, not specific incident" (_Music_ 221).[11] Jonathan Wordsworth also argues that "the coarse boyish pleasures of actual experience could have no part in an _exemplum_" (218), and indeed the Wanderer's youth has been idealized to the point where such boyish pleasures or specific incidents are not allowed to impinge upon readers' consciousness.

I believe that Wordsworth deliberately stripped the Wanderer of specificity in order to make such an idealized, iterative presentation possible. In the various manuscripts, the character which eventually becomes the Wanderer is known by a proper name, whether Armytage (DC MSS. 16, 17) or Drummond (DC MS. 16), by a vocation, the Pedlar, and finally by an avocation, the Wanderer. Even this identity is subject to overdetermination as the trope of antonomasia ensures that synonyms proliferate in The Excursion. Such constant renaming reduces the visibility of the Wanderer's occupation, although obviously not enough for many Romantic and Victorian readers. The Wanderer's profession is further distanced by a reduction of commercial detail. The published poem emphasizes the "solitude and solitary thought" (1.354) of his life as a pedlar rather than his "pack of rustic merchandize" (DC MS. 16: 44). Rather than join a family trade, as in some unpublished versions where the Pedlar follows the example of his brother (DC MSS. 37, 44), the Wanderer seeks the adventure of peddling, that path to "competence and ease" (1.336).

But this adventure is described in generalized terms of travel with little attention paid to the mercantile activity. He is a "lone Enthusiast" (1.348) in the woods;

when with people he observes "the progress and decay / Of many minds, of minds and bodies too; / The history of many families" (1.375-77), but does not sell anything, at least not in so many words. By the time The Excursion was actually published, the Wanderer had been rewritten as a retired pedlar: "His calling laid aside, he lived at ease" (1.386). He is able to dream in the shade with a souvenir of his peddling days, his staff: "The prized memorial of relinquished toils" (1.437). Unlike the catastrophic idleness depicted in the tale of Margaret, his idleness allows him to tell tales. The implicit gentility thus offered elides but also alludes to the profits of peddling. Peddling is also placed firmly in the past where it "Gained merited respect in simpler times" (1.328). Times are no longer simple as the Wanderer repeatedly affirms. Indeed, his long harangue on the industrial revolution in Book VIII begins with his reflections on his identity as pedlar, but he is a pedlar whose tale contains remarkably little peddling as Wordsworth himself tried to peddle the pedlar figure to a polite readership.

Wordsworth stripped the Wanderer of the most obvious signs of his occupation in an attempt to deflect readers' criticism, much as he revised the tale of Margaret to include a more orthodox Christian consolation. He also stripped the Wanderer of specificity in an attempt to make him more exemplary and to remove the "partial bondage" (1.358) of human relationships. The Wanderer, like the poet figure in Book Eighth of The Prelude, is concerned with love of Nature leading to love of Man, not love of men or of a little girl. For amid the manuscripts which become Book I of The Excursion is the description of a relationship between the Wanderer figure and a little girl (DC MSS. 37, 44). The girl resolutely refuses to believe tales of the old man's childhood, tales much like the one we are being presented by the Poet. Kenneth Johnston suggests that the girl is added in order to distance the Poet from the Pedlar and to prevent the "Pedlar's interest in the young man (as a boy) from collapsing into a virtual identity that would destroy the usefulness of their conversation as a framework of conversion" (95).

Why then would this episode be removed, for the Wanderer still seeks to teach the Poet appropriate response within a paradigm of conversion, a paradigm familiar to readers of exemplary biographies? The Poet actively fosters self-identification with the figure who becomes the Wanderer: he is, after all, the "chosen comrade" of the Wanderer (1.61), "from a swarm of rosy boys / Singled out" (1.57-58). His narration of the Wanderer's tale lends itself to the iterative presentation of the Wanderer as representative of superior man, and the Poet as representative of the Wanderer. The Wanderer is a natural poet seasoned by travel; what better role model for a Poet whose "favourite school / Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes" (2.28-29)? Yet even as the Wanderer is presented as an Everyman figure, or at least Everyman Poet, even as he is given the authority required for him to act as moral exemplum in his emotional response, this authority is questioned. If excising the little girl allows a closer identification of Wanderer and Poet, it also destabilizes the authority presumed by such identification. The Poet seeks to be like the Wanderer, presents the Wanderer in such a way as to emphasize points of congruence, and, in doing so, elides specificity; however, such iterative presentation cannot withstand the pressures of the specific.

The episode with the little girl had to go because the Pedlar's response to her, his smiles and tears (DC MS. 37: 79, 92), is inappropriately specific, much like his reaction to Margaret. Reeve Parker argues that

> In her difference she may point to Margaret's difference, and Wordsworth's sketch of her, though not included in the final version of 'The Wanderer,' may reinforce our sense of the tenuousness of his commitment to the wanderer's philosophy. (111)

Even though the episode with the little girl never survived to publication, the questions about the Wanderer's response which it raises do survive though in relation to Margaret. Frances Ferguson suggests that by removing opportunities for pathos like the Wanderer's relationship with the little girl, Wordsworth presents "the Wanderer's love for Margaret . . . as a genuinely anomalous experience--the closest approach to passionate human attachment which he has ever known" (Wordsworth 215). Ferguson contrasts the familial metaphors of substantive love--"'A daughter's welcome [she] gave me, and I loved her / As my own child'" (1.499-500)--with the formal love supported by the idealizing biography. She argues that the formal is "able to apply itself to an infinite number of objects without loss, the substantive attaching itself to a particular object whose mutability seems to color all other acts of perception" (Wordsworth 217). Ferguson's distinction between formal and substantive love illustrates the paradox of exemplification in Book I of The Excursion, for even as the formal encourages iteration, idealization, representation, the substantive requires concretization, specificity, and the possibility that a lost object, a lost love, may be irreplaceable, a possibility permeating the tales of Margaret and the Solitary.

Reading the tale of Margaret as an exemplum for the tale of the Wanderer involves reading against the strategies of isolation promoted by Book I but can be justified by the dramatic framework of the poem. After all, the Wanderer's biography serves as an introduction to the tale of Margaret. It provides justification for the Poet's journey to the site of the ruined cottage, and in retrospect, for the Wanderer's advice to the Poet about the tale of Margaret. It imbues the Wanderer with the moral authority to tell such a tale for the instruction of the Poet.

The tale of Margaret is separated from the Wanderer's tale not only by a graphic break, but by a temporal shift. The narrative past of the Wanderer's youth shifts to the narrative "present" of the Poet's encounter with the Wanderer upon a cottage bench, but between these two "times" lies a description of the Wanderer as timeless:

> Time had compressed the freshness of his cheek
> Into a narrower circle of deep red,
> But had not tamed his eye; that, under brows
> Shaggy and grey, had meanings which it brought
> From years of youth; which, like a Being made
> Of many Beings, he had wondrous skill
> To blend with knowledge of the years to come,
> Human, or such as lie beyond the grave. (1.426-33)

Having already removed the Wanderer from earthly concerns, "the cares / Of ordinary life" (1.356-57), the Poet attributes to his mentor the knowledge of past, present, and future. The claims made in this description go far beyond what might be expected of even the most exemplary individual--"knowledge of the years to come, / Human, or such as lie beyond the grave." The tale then told by the Wanderer might be expected to demonstrate some of this uncanny wisdom or at least to demonstrate some of the attributes just praised by the Poet: serenity, sympathy without joy or grief, self-sufficiency. Of course, the tale of Margaret fulfils none of these criteria, at least not consistently. And in this inconsistency is the collapse of the exemplary principle. For an exempla must be consistent with the principle or thematic entity it seeks to represent, or other forms of representation, other readings, complicate it. These other forms of representation may be more difficult to recognize, given the didactic power of exemplification, but their possibility is inscribed within the exemplary text. I believe that doubt in the Wanderer's philosophy is built into The Excursion through the same technique which gives his philosophy its moral authority, the technique of exemplification. I suggest that doubt is a narrative strategy productive of meaning beyond the exemplum. Whether we should follow the example of the Wanderer is a question which potentially has as many answers as readers; the possibility of more than one answer is itself a radical departure from exemplary biography.

The Wanderer tells many other tales in The Excursion, only some of which are reported by the Poet. The tales act as supplementary evidence for his exemplary status in the narrative past, even as they function as expressive devices, narrative devices, that must be judged in a narrative present. This narrative present, the present of The Excursion, raises questions about the applicability of the Wanderer's responses, especially in the face of alternate response, for example, the response of the Solitary.

Notes

1. See Chapter Four for a more detailed discussion of the repetition involved in the sunrise scenes.

2. Gary Harrison in _Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty and Power_ notes that the reviews of _The Excursion_ are concerned with questions of decorum and realism (177).

3. In the notes to the 1814 edition of _The Excursion_, Wordsworth cites Heron's _Tour of Scotland_ as giving "an intelligent account of the qualities by which this class of men used to be, and still are, in some degree, distinguished, and of the benefits which Society derives from their labours," but does not quote Heron (425). The reference to Heron was expanded for the 1827 edition, perhaps in response to criticism about the Wanderer's vocation.

4. See, for example, T. W. Thompson's _Wordsworth's Hawkshead_ for a discussion of other pedlars Wordsworth could have known and Judson Stanley Lyon's _The Excursion: A Study_ for literary models for the Wanderer.

5. Jonathan Wordsworth identifies some of these latter passages as becoming 2.416-34 and 3.82, 122-27, 141-47, and 156-67 in the 1805 Prelude (Music 167). Each of these passages describes the speaker's heightened perceptions of the world around him.

6. Judson Stanley Lyon notes that The Excursion contains a surprising number of inversions of normal word order, negative adjectives, hyphenated forms, and qualifying clauses (127-131).

7. Colley goes on to explore the significance of Foxe's work and Protestantism in terms of British patriotism. The introduction by the Reverend George Townsend to an 1847 edition of Foxe's Acts and Monuments explicitly links the national interest with moral exemplification (21). In Book IX of The Excursion the Wanderer makes a similar connection between imperialist expansion and moral authority (9.369-391).

8. See Dorothy Wordsworth's letters to Jane Marshall, circa 19 February 1810, and to Lady Beaumont, dated 28 February 1810. The letters could be read as partisan support for a brother, but the multiple adjectives suggest genuine interest: "I am very very much pleased with it. The lives of Sir Thomas More and Cardinal Wolsey are most exceedingly interesting" ("To Lady Beaumont" 392).

9. Wordsworth chose biographical models for many of the tales in The Excursion, often identifying them in notes or in letters. Thus we learn that the Matron is based on Betty Yewdale (or Youdall or Youdell), Margaret on different persons: "some of them strangers to [Wordsworth], & others daily under [his] notice" ("Fenwick" 376), the Wanderer on James Patrick and a host of others, the Solitary partially on Joseph Fawcett, and so on. Wordsworth apparently found it necessary to qualify and explain the characters he created, to account for subjects and subject positions through external sources.

10. See Chapter Four for a discussion of fabula and story.

11. This focus on habitual experience rather than specific incident is particularly interesting given James Chandler's argument in *Wordsworth's Second Nature* about the moral power of habit for both Wordsworth and Edmund Burke. Michael Baron in *Language and Relationship in Wordsworth's Writing* also notes that "Basing an aesthetic on habit . . . . engages with the pedagogic commonplace that example teaches more effectually than precept and therefore with the language of books of instruction for children" (188), an important point given *The Excursion*'s educational mandate.

Chapter 4:

"reconverted to the world":

Repetition and the Solitary

The tale of the Solitary as told in Books II and III of The Excursion offers another version of exemplification, another version of potential biography; for if the Wanderer is "an idea of what [Wordsworth] fancied [his] own character might have become in his circumstances" (Fenwick Excursion 373), the Solitary offers the alternate model, partially explored in The Prelude, of a sensitive individual disillusioned by the French Revolution. Critics have not been hesitant to recognize the similarities between Wordsworth and the Solitary, any more than they have been reluctant to identify the Wanderer with Wordsworth. Edward E. Bostetter calls the Solitary a "true Wordsworthian" (437) while Samuel H. Hay argues that the tale of the Solitary is "a thinly disguised account of Wordsworth's own spiritual travails" (243), an idea that can already be found in Christopher Wordsworth's Memoirs of William Wordsworth

(1:91), published only a year after the poet's death. Critics have also identified other models for the Solitary, both literary and historical.[1] However, the Solitary is more than a historical or literary composite; he acts as an exemplum, albeit primarily negative, as much as the Wanderer or Margaret does.

With the figure of the Solitary, Wordsworth fulfils Coleridge's desire for

> a poem, in blank verse, addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and are sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness, disguising the same under the soft title of domestic attachment and contempt for visionary *philosophes*. (527)

For, as Coleridge himself commented about the Scriptures in *The Statesman's Manual*, "both Facts and Persons must of necessity have a two-fold significance, a past and a future, a temporary and perpetual, a particular and a universal application. They must be at once Portraits and Ideals" (30). *The Excursion* is constructed around the need to reconvert the Solitary, and by extension all such disillusioned idealists, to the world. Arthur Beatty associates this reconversion with associationist psychology, arguing that the Solitary must exercise fancy which will eventually lead him to imagination and maturity (255-56). Kenneth Johnston argues that the Wanderer offers "meditation on the Great Chain of Being as therapeutic mental exercise" (275) as

> Against the Solitary's "vacancy," the Wanderer pits the fullness of life available to the mind that sees in nature "Life continuous, Being unimpaired" (755), a form of imagination which, though wholly reliant on natural suggestion, meets nature on equal, consummate terms, neither engulfed nor overawed. (277)

Johnston notes that this imaginative ideal is "generalized into a hope for mankind" (283), but, of course, the Wanderer does not succeed in "curing" the Solitary who returns alone to "the one cottage in the lonely dell" (9.774). Despite the Poet's promise of a sequel which was to reveal

> To enfeebled Power,

> From this communion with uninjured Minds,
> What renovation had been brought; and what
> Degree of healing to a wounded spirit,
> Dejected, and habitually disposed
> To seek, in degradation of the Kind
> Excuse and solace for her own defects;
> How far those erring notions were reformed;
> And whether aught, of tendency as good
> And pure, from further intercourse ensued,"
> (9.783-792)

despite Wordsworth's plot summary of this sequel,[2] the Solitary is finally left alone.

The promise of a sequel, however, raises the issue of repetition, an issue already structuring the Solitary's tale. Not only does the Solitary repeat the tale of his life already told by the Wanderer, his experiences within the tale reveal a pattern of oscillation between enthusiasm and disillusionment, and the episode itself participates in a larger pattern of repetition that informs *The Excursion*. The Solitary's tale demonstrates that, sometimes, once is not enough for narrative or moral action. The phrase I use in the title of this chapter, "'reconverted to the world'" (3.734), reveals the difficulties inherent, not only in the Solitary's attempts to change the world, but also Wordsworth's attempts to do so with The Excursion. Although this phrase epitomizes the goal of the Wanderer and the Poet for the remaining books of The Excursion, it occurs in the Solitary's description of his enthusiasm for the French revolution, a description marked by disillusionment: "'Thus was I reconverted to the world; / Society became my glittering bride, / And airy hopes my children'" (3.734-36). The lines echo his earlier delight in his bride and their two children, a delight that turns to despair at their deaths. Even without such metaphors, readers know that this "reconversion" to the world must fail, not only because prudence dictated that an enthusiastic response to the French Revolution must be tempered by regret in Britain in 1814, but also because the Wanderer has already described the Solitary's repeated rise and fall.

This chapter explores the relationships between the tales of Solitary and repetition, revolution and repetition, where revolution carries within it connotations of returns and cycles. The Solitary's tale moves The Excursion from simple exemplification, a trope which relies upon the principle of iteration, one instance standing for many, to the complexities of repetition, where infinite variety necessarily exists, if only in memory. I intend to explore the relationship between iteration and repetition in this chapter. Mieke Bal refers to "real repetition when an event occurs only once and is presented a number of times" while iteration involves "a whole series of identical events . . . presented at once" (78); Seymour Chatman describes multiple singular presentation as "several representations, each of one of several story moments, as in 'Monday, I went to bed early; Tuesday, I went to bed early; Thursday, I went to bed early,' etc." (78). The Solitary's tales display all three frequencies, where frequency is "the numerical relationship between events in the fabula and those in the story" (Bal 77). Bal defines a fabula as "a series of logically and chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors" (5) while a story is a fabula ordered in a particular manner (49).[3] Examining the levels of fabula and story allows me to consider "the conditions of the process of reception" (Bal 49), the effects of ordering and selection upon readers since the stories of the Solitary's tale, as told by the Wanderer and the Solitary and repeated by the Poet, demonstrate different orderings, different priorities. I will suggest that the Solitary's tale serves to prepare the reader for repetitions to come. For even as I concentrate on the presentation of the Solitary's tale, I do not wish to neglect the repetitive nature of experience and of characters in The Excursion, a feature often criticized. The tales of the Solitary offer a way to read not only Wordsworth's or even "enthusiasts'" experiences of the French Revolution, but also the various and yet repetitive experiences described in the Churchyard books of The Excursion.

As Johnston notes, Wordsworth subjected the Solitary to "almost every personal, social, religious, and philosophic catastrophe that could possibly befall a character born, like himself, in the last quarter of the eighteenth century" (265). The overdetermination of the Solitary's tragedy is matched by overdetermination in the telling, and retelling, of his tale; the loss of his family and his idealism is repeated not only in the two versions of the tale offered by the Wanderer and the Solitary, but within the tales themselves. In both the Wanderer's and the Solitary's version, the Solitary suffers from recurring enthusiasm.

His first episode has a benevolent conclusion: although he was "'less a pastor with his flock / Than a soldier among soldiers'" (2.183-84), he finds happiness in domestic retirement with his bride. I mention this episode, not only because of its parallels with his success during the French Revolution when he was "'reconverted to the world'" (3.734), but because the Wanderer has much to say about the Solitary's character during his narration of it (2.173-186). The adjectives Wordsworth uses to describe the Solitary and his upbringing shift from words like "lowly," "sheltered," "well-tended," "humblest," and "grateful" to "curious," "vague," "intellectual," "gay," "lax," and "buoyant." For the Wanderer, this early stint of military service rates fourteen lines, the Solitary's entire marriage and his grief a mere sixteen more (2.195-210). The Solitary's enthusiasm and disillusionment with the French Revolution take up by far the most lines in the Wanderer's tale, an astounding ninety-three of a total of 151 lines. The Solitary's activities after his revolutionary fervour had faded but before he settled in this valley are reduced to the phrase "'after a wandering course / Of discontent'" (2.304-05), perhaps because, despite yet another vision of a new world, they are lacking content as far as the Wanderer is concerned.

The Solitary's version of his own tale follows the same pattern though the proportions, not surprisingly, are extremely different. He does not mention his early stint in the military or in fact any economic circumstances in his life. He begins by mourning his bride (3.480-97). His description of their happiness together and with their family occupies 139 lines (3.497-636), their tragedy and his grief another sixty-nine (3.636-705). The French Revolution takes up comparatively less space, 124 lines (3.705-830). Another thirty-eight lines describe a trip to America, during which his wife's memory reproaches him (3.831-869). While in America, he goes through two shorter cycles of enthusiasm and despair for American society and natural man, at forty-three and forty-two lines respectively (3.870-913; 3.913-955). The strict chronology of the Wanderer's version is disrupted in the Solitary's by his insistence on grief. Each story bears evidence of elision or omission of experience: the Solitary's travels after the revolution in the Wanderer's version, and the Solitary's early career in his own life story; each story serves a different function.

Yet both stories share a common fabula, or at least enough elements to justify their common subject, the life of the Solitary. The Wanderer's version of the tale can be reduced to boy gets career, boy loses career but gets girl, boy loses girl (and family) but gets revolution, boy loses revolution and wastes his life. The Solitary's version, though considerably more sympathetic to himself, follows the same pattern only ignoring the earlier career and inserting the American experience: boy gets New World, boy loses New World, twice. The fabula does not present real repetition (78), the same event presented several times, though the text does present the same life several times; instead, the fabula contains events triggering similar reactions, enthusiasm, and similar consequences, disillusionment. The Solitary's tale is thus structured according to a principle of recurrence that is echoed in its repeated presentation in The Excursion. The tale and the life it describes become overdetermined by narrative frequency--both repetitive and multiple singular. Any chance that the tale, or the life, of the Solitary can be confined to the iteration of exemplification is destroyed by the versions told by the Wanderer and the Solitary.

Obviously, the effect on the reader produced by each version of the tale is different even though they are filtered through the same narrator, the Poet, because sources, lengths, emphases differ. The effect also differs because the second is a retelling of the first, separated from the first by the tale of the Pensioner and its appeal to pathos and indignation. The reader comes to the Solitary's version of his tale already aware of the Solitary's history and his reaction to another's experience. Like the Wanderer, whose own life story intersects with that of Margaret for the benefit of the reader, the character of the Solitary is developed through his interaction with a figure of pathos. This interaction provides an emotional context for the second telling of the Solitary's tale that is absent from the first, an emotional context that still has space for forgetfulness. Like the Poet in Book I who forgets Margaret in the middle of her tale, the Solitary repeatedly forgets his subject, the Pensioner, in his vision of "'a mighty city'" (2.835): "'But I forget our Charge, as utterly / I then forgot him'" (2.878-79), as utterly he forgets his family in the enthusiasm of revolution. The vision itself of

> "diamonds and of gold,
> With alabaster domes, and silver spires,
> And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
> Uplifted" (2.839-42)

finds echoes in the "'golden palace'" (3.714) of the Solitary's revolutionary imagination. This tale of the old man serves as yet another opportunity for recurrence, another version of enthusiasm and despair. It extends the developing pattern of the Solitary's experience into the narrative present of his life in the vale; it also extends revolutionary concerns into the narrative present. After all, the Solitary is indignant at the treatment received by this old man who "lived dependent for his bread / Upon the laws of public charity" (2.739-40), just as the speaker of The Prelude, that other tale of revolution, is indignant at the figure of the hunger-bitten girl (9.510).[4] The Wanderer's version of the Solitary's tale lacks this affective touchstone: "'I loved the old Man, for I pitied him'" (2.757). The Solitary's actions are first judged without the ameliorating evidence of sympathy, but this evidence is not withheld for long.

For even as the two versions of the Solitary's tale contain many of the same elements, their functions within the fictional world of The Excursion are quite different. The first tale is designed to provide justification for a journey. The Poet would prefer to join the "'festive matins'" (2.140) of May Day celebrations, but the Wanderer wants to continue climbing the mountain. The tale then acts as justification for the delaying of pleasure:

> "You will receive, before the hour of noon,
> Good recompense, I hope, for this day's toil,
> From sight of One who lives secluded there,

> Lonesome and lost," (2.157-160)

just as the syntax of these lines delays recognition of the Wanderer's goal, the Solitary. The Wanderer, not satisfied with only offering this teaser, sets out to convince the Poet with his version of the Solitary's tale. Yet the tale of the Solitary is at first just one of the many way-beguiling tales offered by the Wanderer (2.37). Susan Edwards Meisenhelder has noticed how the Wanderer controls the itinerary of their excursion (200), and indeed the Poet's experiences are to a large degree orchestrated by the Wanderer. But he describes his version of the Solitary's tale as a "'brief communication'" (2.163), while the Poet glosses it as "preparatory notices/ That served my Fellow-traveller to beguile / The way" (2.316-18), preparatory, that is, to what the Solitary himself might say. Indeed the Wanderer is anxious "'Not to forestall such knowledge as may be / More faithfully collected from himself [the Solitary]'" (2.161-62). The Wanderer appears to assume this knowledge will be in the form of a philosophic discussion rather than another version of the Solitary's life as he and the Poet try to stop the Solitary from telling his tale (3.468-74).

Nevertheless, the Solitary's version is granted authority by the Wanderer himself, though he does attempt to provide a moral context for judging the Solitary. Indeed the tale is already framed as repetitive by the moral context developed through tales of the Wanderer's childhood and of Margaret. The Solitary could have turned out like the Wanderer as they shared "'lowly parentage'" (2.165) and a wholesome environment; that the Solitary did not is evidence of the sudden turns of fate, and narrative. The Solitary's fate is also linked with Margaret's as the Wanderer praises the Poet's sensibility: "'For I have knowledge that you do not shrink, / From moving spectacles'" (2.490-91) in yet another attempt to keep the Poet moving towards the Wanderer's goal, the Solitary.

The second telling of the tale does not have to catch the Poet's attention; that it does is evidence of his attraction to "moving spectacles," whether at Margaret's or the Solitary's cottage: "pleased I looked upon my grey-haired Friend / As if to thank him" (2.658-59). The second tale is offered as a justification for a way of looking at the world, a way of retreating from the world. But it is offered in a highly self-conscious manner. The Poet insists that the Solitary's speech,

> look, gesture, tone of voice,
> Though discomposed and vehement, were such
> As skill and graceful nature might suggest
> To a proficient of the tragic scene
> Standing before the multitude, beset
> With dark events. (3.463-68)

Given the Poet's appreciation of dramatic narration, his praise of the Wanderer's story-telling in Book I, for example, it is not surprising that he should focus on the technique of a professional orator. For, as the Wanderer's version makes quite clear, the Solitary preached not only religion but also revolution:

> "Thither his popular talents he transferred;
> And, from the pulpit, zealously maintained
> The cause of Christ and civil liberty,
> As one, and moving to one glorious end." (2.219-222)

Despite the Solitary's rhetorical skill, the Poet does not question his sincerity or the Solitary's claim that his words are "unguarded" (3.494). The Solitary's speech is glossed as "the bitter language of the heart" (3.462), his tale a "mournful narrative--commenced in pain / In pain commenced, and ended without peace" (4.2-4). The syntactic repetition mirrors not only the patterns of mourning within the Solitary's version, but the larger patterns of repetition developed throughout Books II and III. The Solitary's version, rather than offering a motive for a hike or way to pass the time, justifies his isolation:

> "Enough is told! Here am I--ye have heard
> What evidence I seek, and vainly seek;
> What from my fellow-beings I require,
> And either they have not to give, or I
> Lack virtue to receive; what I myself,
> Too oft by wilful forfeiture, have lost
> Nor can regain." (3.956-62)

The Solitary's outburst reinforces the patterns of repetition and multiple singular presentation in its parallel clauses: what I seek, what I require, what I have lost. Even though the tense of the last clause places this loss in the irrecoverable past, the possibility that loss could be repeated remains with his admission "Too oft by wilful forfeiture." Kenneth Johnston argues that the Solitary's "self-pitying attachment" to his life story lessens the tale's effect (263), and indeed these lines have a certain combative quality about them. Even as the Solitary defiantly proclaims his despair, however, he denies desiring his listeners' pity: "'But spare your pity, if there be in me / Aught that deserves respect: for I exist, / Within myself, not comfortless'" (3.965-67).

Despite the Solitary's protests, he has attracted the pity of his audience who "sate listening with compassion due" (4.7). Indeed, the Poet claims that the Solitary's "native feeling" was "grateful to [their] minds" (4.5) and that the Wanderer's heart was moved (4.9). The Solitary's version of his tale provokes a greater emotional response than the Wanderer's "preparatory notices" because of the greater emotional complexity displayed both in grief suffered and compromises made. Although the Wanderer acknowledges the changing nature of grief (2.206-07) and the conflicting impulses sparked by the French Revolution in the Solitary (2.272-74), he has no problem judging the Solitary as "'Steeped in a self-indulging spleen, that wants not / Its own voluptuousness'" (2.311-12). The Solitary's version is, of course, more sympathetic, describing his life with and loss of his family in greater detail; more surprising is the amount of responsibility he accepts for his choices after their deaths. He cannot continue his description of the revolution's glory days because "'Scorn and contempt forbid [him] to proceed!'" (3.768); he refuses to class himself with those idealists who recanted the revolution once they realized its consequences (3.778); he reports the shady compromises he made to gain influence (3.782-85); he speculates on what infamous deeds he might have committed if on the continent (3.812-16). The portrait of disillusioned idealist thus presented is much more psychologically convincing even as it is more overdetermined by repetition and recurrence.

The Solitary's repetition of his own tale could be viewed as a rhetorical ploy designed to extract a greater affective response from the audience, functioning much like the Wanderer's repetition of the Matron's tale, except for one crucial detail: the Solitary does not know that his tale has already been told. The repetition of the Solitary's tale is similar to the Wanderer's experience of the sunrise, recounted by the Poet in Book I (1.197-218), and retold by the Wanderer himself in Book IV (4.110-22). As in the Solitary's tale, the two versions describe the same experience, but focus on different aspects: the intensity of youth in the Poet's version, the fact that such intensity is now a memory in the Wanderer's. The incident is also related without any personal knowledge on the part of the first teller: the Poet is too young to have witnessed the Wanderer's youth while the Solitary points out that the Wanderer never met his wife ((3.480-83). The fact that they can nevertheless relate episodes which they did not witness implies not only other repetitions--they must have heard about these episodes before--but also the repetitive nature of narrative itself.

Even as a narrative sequence can be transmitted to another and/or can be repeated ad infinitum, the effect must necessarily vary, if only because only one telling can be the first. It should be no surprise, then, that when the

Solitary and the Wanderer create stories from the same fabula, the effect should be so different. The differences between the two versions of the Solitary's tale include point of view, priority, space allowed, emotional investment, and empathy. The Solitary may not repeat his tale to achieve a different effect, but Wordsworth certainly does. Part of this difference is a matter of time. As originally conceived, the Solitary's despair stemmed from disillusionment caused by the course of the French Revolution; the Solitary's personal tragedy was only added after Catharine and Thomas Wordsworth died in 1812. The Wanderer's version and, as John Alban Finch notes (313),[5] his remedy for the Solitary's despair were largely composed before Wordsworth gave the Solitary a family.

Exactly when Wordsworth composed the Solitary's tale, particularly as it is presented in Book II, remains a matter of debate. Ernest de Selincourt argues that most of Book II was written in 1806, but that some parts were earlier (415). Jonathan Wordsworth believes the Solitary's tale dates from 1806 (Borders 364, 449). Mark L. Reed argues that only the opening lines of Book II about the Minstrel date from 1804 and that most of it was probably written between December 1809 and late May 1810, but acknowledges that it could have been written in basic form as early as 1806 (23). Kenneth Johnston prefers the later dates, in part because they further his argument about the overall pattern of *The Recluse*, though he does admit that "Wordsworth doubtless entertained some ideas for a story like the Solitary's earlier (especially insofar as it is a fictionalized abstract of his own life story)" (383). Part of the confusion arises from lines in DC MSS. 47 and 48, which include *The Prelude* MSS. X and Y. Material eventually used for Books II and III of *The Excursion* is interspersed with Wordsworth's attempts to expand *The Prelude* to its 1805 format, a format that took into account his own experiences in London and of the French Revolution. The lines which found their way into *The Excursion* as part of the Solitary's experiences were not necessarily written at the same time as those for *The Prelude*; indeed, in some cases, they were clearly fitted into the manuscripts at some later date.[6] However, the juxtaposition of passages is suggestive, especially given the revolutionary context.

I believe that in these manuscripts Wordsworth is working through his experience of the French Revolution by trying out different narrative forms, different subject positions. The best known, and many would argue the most successful, is the autobiographical narrative of The Prelude. But even within The Prelude Wordsworth explores the implications of revolution in several characters, including the poet figure, Michel Beaupuy, and Vaudracour.[7] Mark Reed has suggested that lines towards "Vaudracour and Julia" were probably composed between early October and late autumn 1804 while lines eventually published as "The French Revolution as It Appeared to Enthusiasts at Its Commencement" in The Friend (1809) were composed as part of The Prelude in late November or December 1804 (39). Clearly, Wordsworth was concerned with the French Revolution throughout this period. That the manuscript, DC MS. 48, which contains his portrait of Michel Beaupuy, should also contain material towards the Solitary's experience and towards the idealization of the Wanderer as minstrel is not surprising.

For as Wordsworth tried to articulate what the French Revolution meant to enthusiasts, to himself, he fell back upon indignation and idealization. Beaupuy uses the image of the hunger-bitten girl to rouse his listener: "'Tis against that / That we are fighting'" (9.517-18); so too does the Solitary use his tale of the Pensioner. The Solitary also used indignation to rouse revolutionary crowds with a potent mixture of prayer and prophecy (3.765). But indignation alone is not enough to represent the mood of revolution, so Wordsworth turns to idealization. Both the Wanderer and the Solitary reflect upon the "'glorious opening, the unlooked-for dawn, / That promised everlasting joy to France'" (2.212-13), the ideal of liberty for a time taking precedence over the reality experienced by the Solitary: "'For rights, / Widely--inveterately usurped upon, / I spake with vehemence'" (3.793-95). Wordsworth's idealization of Beaupuy as patriot displays a similar ascendence over reality; for though Wordsworth claims that Beaupuy "the fate of later times / Lived not to see, nor what we now behold / Who have as ardent hearts as he had then" (9.428-30), he was not killed until 1796 and so took part in France's expansionist wars (J. Wordsworth Prelude 334). Also idealized is the image of the poet as minstrel which opens Book II of The Excursion and was written during this period of revolutionary concern in DC MS. 48. Though the passage now refers to the Wanderer, it was originally intended to describe the poet of The Prelude (M. Reed 646), a poet who is trying to articulate the upheaval of revolution in a British context. Wordsworth is placed in the difficult position of trying to articulate an ideal while distancing himself from its application; the tale of the Solitary, as originally conceived, is one such attempt. The Wanderer's version of the Solitary's tale, except for the lines about the Solitary's marriage and family, remains remarkably close to this conception with its emphasis on revolutionary conduct and misconduct.

DC MS. 71, the MS. P of De Selincourt's edition, contains Books I to III.423, the longest manuscript of any portion of The Excursion. Again, estimates on dating range from De Selincourt's 1806 (371), Jonathan Wordsworth's 1810 (Music 275), Mark Reed's 1809 to 1812 with inserts from 1813 and 1814 (22-23), and Finch's early 1814 (320). Reed offers the most comprehensive description of the material in MS. 71, noting that the poem was expanded in several places as two leaves were cut out of and eight sewn into the main notebook. The history of the Solitary's wife and children was among the additions; so too was the Solitary's trip to America (M. Reed 676).

By having the Solitary experience enthusiasm and despair, twice, in America, Wordsworth gestures towards other revolutions, specifically the American revolution which some saw as the glorious prototype of the French. James K. Chandler notes that Edmund Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution was solicited by Victor De Pont on the assumption that Burke, as parliamentary champion of the American revolution, would support the French revolution as well (19). Burke, of course, responded with a document which attacked not only the French Revolution, but British sympathizers of the revolution, a category which would have included the young Wordsworth. Chandler suggests that Wordsworth wanted to respond to Burke in 1793, but chose Bishop Watson as a more suitable target (19-20). By 1814, however, Wordsworth came to agree with Burke on many issues, an attitude evident not only in The Prelude but The Excursion as well. If Burke, however, felt the American and French revolutions were completely different situations, the Solitary finds the situation in America, "'this unknit Republic'" (3.914) disturbingly familiar, another revolutionary ideal shattered. The Solitary's search for natural man, "'that pure archetype of human greatness'" (3.951), and his inevitable disappointment also connects the American experience with Rousseau's ideal of the primitive man. Given the veneration offered to Rousseau during the French Revolution, and criticized at length by Burke in his Reflections Upon the French Revolution (262-68), associations of revolution permeate the concluding episode in this expanded version of the Solitary's tale.

But the most substantive change from the original conception of the Solitary's tale is, of course, the addition of the Solitary's family. By expanding the tale to include personal tragedy, Wordsworth shifted the focus from purely political disenchantment to personal despair. This shift does not imply that revolutionary experience ceases to matter or that political disillusionment is without despair. In the 1805 Prelude Wordsworth describes a moral crisis brought about by the corruption of the ideals of the revolution:

> till, demanding proof,
> And seeking it in every thing, I lost
> All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
> Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
> Yielded up moral questions in despair. (10.896-900)

The Solitary describes a similar fruitless questioning in his grief that led to despair:

> "Then my soul
> Turned inward,--to examine of what stuff
> Time's fetters are composed; and life was put
> To inquisition, long and profitless!
> By pain of heart--now checked--and now impelled--
> The intellectual power, through words and things,
> Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way!"
> (3.695-701)

Both revolutionary disappointment and personal grief fail to abate in the face of reason; indeed, both lead to despair because of the type of reasoning done. Wordsworth is not content with simply responding to loss by preaching Christian consolation. I do not deny that such consolation is there in The Excursion, remember Margaret's "'soul / fixed on the Cross'" (1.936-37), but so is the recognition that such consolation is not easy to accept.

Some degree of psychological realism is developed through the Solitary's tale, always remembering of course that these are very stylized characters lacking even proper names in the published versions.[8] Any discussion of psychology in a chapter exploring repetition brings to mind Freud and his concept of the repetition compulsion, but his writings on mourning and melancholia are more relevant here. I do not believe it is possible, or at least desirable, to psychoanalyse a fictional construct. But even as Freud distinguishes between mourning and melancholia on the basis of the loss of self-esteem in the melancholiac (155), even as he notes the tendency of melancholia to turn into mania (164), Wordsworth portrays the Solitary in similar terms.

After all, the Solitary describes himself as stripped "'of all the golden fruit / Of self-esteem; and by the cutting blasts / Of self-reproach familiarly assailed'" (3.488-90) and oscillates between enthusiasm and disillusionment in his tale.

The Solitary is not the only figure, however, who suffers loss in his tale; his wife mourns their children's deaths. Here, as in Margaret's and later tales of The Excursion, mourning is depicted as a process without simple progression. Like Margaret who initially could offer "'words of hope'" (1.685) but eventually sank under the pressure of absence, the Solitary's wife falls from the "'pure glory'" of accepting Providence's will (3.672) "'Into a gulf obscure of silent grief, / And keen heart-anguish--of itself ashamed, / Yet obstinately cherishing itself'" (3.675-77). Perhaps the most poignant loss repeated in the tale, however, is that of the Wordsworths.

The tale of the Solitary as published is implicitly linked to the deaths of Catharine and Thomas Wordsworth and the grief experienced by both William and Mary Wordsworth. DC MS. 73 makes this connection even clearer as lines eventually published as the poems "Maternal Grief" and "Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old" were attributed to the Solitary. In explaining the genesis of "Maternal Grief," Wordsworth confirms that

> This was in part an overflow from the Solitary's description of his own and his wife's feelings upon the decease of their children, and, I will venture to add for private notice only, is faithfully set forth from my Wife's feelings and habits after the loss of our two children within half a year of each other. (Fenwick 477)

"Characteristics of a Child Three Years Old," with the verbs in the past tense, occurs within the lines which eventually became "Maternal Grief" in DC MS. 73. Mary Wordsworth's grief not only inspired the descriptions of mourning in the Solitary's tale, it has acted as evidence for the dating of the manuscripts. Much of DC MS. 71, which describes the Solitary's loss though not in such detail as MS. 73, is written in Mary Wordsworth's hand, and as Mark Reed notes, "in view of the melancholy family events of the recent past W may be supposed unlikely to have employed MW early in 1813 to copy materials dealing with the Solitary's happy marriage and its tragic conclusion" (677). Given the concern among family and friends for Mary Wordsworth's health,[9] such a conclusion seems justified.

By the time The Excursion was ready for publication, the grief described in the Solitary's tale had been toned down for public consumption. The overflow of the Solitary's and his wife's feelings, the overflow of the Wordsworths' feelings, was tempered by considerations of propriety and privacy. The guilty anguish of

> "To my Co-partner in this bitter loss
> Support I could not yield who did myself
> Require support from others less disturbed
> Or from the blank and calm of solitude,"

and "'Dark became doubly dark to outward weight / Was inward added, wheresoe'er our minds / In converse met'" (DC MS. 73 82^v) is sanitized to the sentiment: "'Immense / The space that severed us'" (3.660-61). Yet the published versions still suggest that relief is found in narration. The Solitary blames his own frailty for the need to tell his tale (3.496-97), and the Poet believes telling the tale yields the Solitary some relief (4.6). Certainly, psychoanalytic theory and clinical practice suggest that relief can be achieved through narration, an idea not foreign to the Romantics.[10] Surely, it is not too far fetched to suggest that Wordsworth may have been seeking relief himself with the Solitary's tale as presented in DC MSS. 71 and 73. But the exploration of grief in the telling of the Solitary's tale does not end there because the tales in The Excursion do not end there.

The Solitary's tale repeats the grief that has already been expressed through the tales of Margaret and the Pensioner; it looks forward to the mourning and potential relief in the remaining embedded tales. Indeed, after the Solitary's tale and the Wanderer's rather ineffective cure, The Excursion moves to a graveyard, so that even tales of the living are placed in a memorial context. The tale of the Lovesick Youth in Book VI is yet another repetition of the Solitary. When the tale is introduced, the Solitary refuses to believe anyone could have died of pain and grief (6.115-17), and indeed the Lovesick Youth dies of a fever after his grief has, supposedly, been cured.[11] The cure, however, is remarkably similar to that proposed for the Solitary--fresh air and exercise (6.167-75). The Pastor describes the attempt as hopeless (6.177), before being interrupted by the Wanderer who does not want his own prescription for the Solitary put in doubt. The Lovesick Youth recovers, but then so did the Solitary time and time again.

The last five books of The Excursion are often criticized as being repetitive, but repetition is not necessarily a bad thing. Not merely a device for emphasis, repetition offers infinite permutations of experience and calls the representation of experience into question. The tales of the Solitary foreground choices made on the level of story and the effects these choices may have on a reader. They also demonstrate the effects a particular narrator, or a series of narrators, may have upon a reader, an important consideration when looking at the repetition in tales to come. The Churchyard tales repeat many of the issues raised in the tales of the Solitary, including response, grief, responsibility, revolution. But the reader's experience of these concerns in the Churchyard books is tempered by tales already experienced, responses already modelled. The tales of the Solitary demonstrate the difference between a representative model and a character, however stylized, capable of provoking an emotional response, not despite but because of repetition.

Notes

1. Wordsworth himself identifies Joseph Fawcett as one model for the Solitary (Fenwick *Excursion* 374); Kenneth Johnston claims John Thelwall could be another (383). Literary sources could include the *Octavius* of Minucius Felix and Thomas Amory's *The Life and Opinions of John Buncle*; see Alan C. Hill and James Mulvihill, respectively.

2. The Fenwick note for *The Excursion* offers a brief sketch of the proposed plot:

> we should resume our wanderings, and pass the Borders into his native country, where, as I hoped, he might witness, in the society of the Wanderer, some religious ceremony--a sacrament, say, in the open field, or a preaching among the mountains--which, by recalling to his mind the days of his early Childhood, when he had been present on such occasions in company with his Parents and nearest kindred, might have dissolved his heart into tenderness, and so done more towards restoring the Christian faith in which he

> had been educated, and, with that, contentedness and even cheerfulness of mind, than all that the Wanderer and Pastor, by their several effusions and addresses, had been able to effect. (474-75).

3. Bal discusses narrative in terms of fabula, story, and text. Michael J. Toolan has questioned the need to separate story from text, where story is the level at which choices are made about sequences, pace, and frequency and text is the level of narration (10-11). He argues that Bal's distinction "amounts to an attempt to separate a layer at which a narrative agent _relates_ the text from other aspects of text (the level at which choices are made over how the story is _presented_)" (11). But Bal's distinctions can work very well for poetic narratives, despite her own attitude toward them.

4. Unless otherwise noted, I have used the 1850 version of _The Prelude_.

5. Finch argues that unless

> the Wanderer is to be granted a monumental tact in avoiding all reference to the real causes of the Solitary's sorrow, the most likely explanation of the tangential character of the Wanderer's remarks is that Wordsworth retained in Book IV substantially what he had written when the Solitary was suffering from political disenchantment. (313)

6. Lines from the tale of the Pensioner, for example, are found scattered throughout DC MS. 47, but their order in the manuscript does not reflect their composition. Later drafts, as on 6^v, can be found before earlier ones as Wordsworth filled up blank spaces in his lines towards *The Prelude*.

7. It has become a critical commonplace that the tale of Vaudracour and Julia "stands in lieu of an account of [Wordsworth's] relationship with Annette Vallon" (J. Wordsworth *Prelude* 340) and reflects to some degree Wordsworth's sense of guilt at leaving both her and his

daughter. The resonances become even more complex when the Solitary's grief for his children, though sparked by a different loss in Wordsworth's life, is taken into account.

8. Like the Wanderer who bore a proper name for at least a while in manuscript, the Solitary's wife was known as Anna in DC MS. 73. I believe that she was stripped of her name and her few words in an attempt to tone down the tragedy and to focus on the subjectivity of the Solitary.

9. Dorothy Wordsworth's letters in particular testify to the worry the family felt over Mary Wordsworth's failing spirits and health after the deaths of her children. Mary Wordsworth suffered from depression after Catharine's death, bore Thomas' "with striking fortitude" (W. Wordsworth "To De Quincey" 51) at first, and then sank into depression again.

10. The figure of the Ancient Mariner who is compelled to repeat his tale and the Female Vagrant from Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain poems who feels better once she has told the Sailor her story are only two examples.

11. See Chapter Seven for a discussion of the tale's conclusion.

Chapter 5:

"Epitomise the life":

Multiplication in the Churchyard Books

With the tales told in the Churchyard books of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth moves from a strategy of repetition to one of multiplication in tale-telling. These tales in Books V through VII still bear evidence of isolation, exemplification, and repetition, strategies I have looked at in previous chapters, but the emphasis in these books is on the cumulative effect of the tales and of the strategies. After all, the tale of the Matron and her husband, examined in my introduction, includes all the strategies discussed so far, but it is also immediately followed by the tale of the Scottish peasant who ploughs a rocky field without complaint, and a reference to the tale already told of the Pensioner who endured abuse without complaint and so died. If the moral of the Matron's tale is to endure without complaint because hardship may indeed be a "'gift of heaven'" (5.720), the tales which follow question the value of this gift. For if a series of different tales can be linked as exempla to support a philosophical or religious position, they can also destabilize this position in their very connections. The tales told in the Churchyard books are intended by the Wanderer, if not necessarily Wordsworth, as the exempla which will win his argument with the Solitary since their argument thus far has been without "'visible recompense'" (5.627). The Pastor's mandate then is to dig "'The mine of real life'" (5.630) and present them with "'virgin ore, that gold which we, by pains / Fruitless as those of aery alchemists, / Seek from the torturing crucible'" (5.632-34). The Wanderer wants to exchange the sophistical twists of argument for the clarity of narration: "'Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts; / For our disputes, plain pictures'" (5.637-38). The tales which the Pastor then tells, however, do not meet the Wanderer's criteria of "solid facts" and "plain pictures". They are certainly not "virgin ore" unsullied by intention, for the Pastor, like the Wanderer, has something to prove.[1]

William Galperin argues that the "Pastor's epitaphs place a counter, representational pressure on their 'subjects' by making them more idealized, more a testimony to the prevalence of desire, than they need be" (Revision 51-52).[2] I have already discussed the tension between representation and idealization in relation to the Wanderer in Chapter Three; this tension changes somewhat in the later books of The Excursion because of the number and type of tales involved. The tales told in the Churchyard may still be used as exempla, but they do not stand alone. Unlike the Wanderer, their subjects are not held up as uniquely chosen, but are presented as some among many possible models.

In this chapter I discuss the Churchyard tales in terms of a series. Hans Robert Jauss has argued that each literary work must be inserted "into its 'literary series' to recognize its historical position and significance in the context of the experience of literature" ("Literary" 32), where this series consists of not only preceding or competing works but also works that come after the work in question but that affect its reception. But a series which affects readers' perceptions, even in retrospect, can exist within a literary work as well, does exist within The Excursion. In this chapter I explore the dynamics of a series in the Churchyard books. I suggest that the

Churchyard tales rely upon a trope of multiplication, but this multiplication involves the possibility of division by a common denominator and the danger of reduction. I argue that the very diversity of subjects and experiences leads to a form of universalism, not innocent of revolutionary implications. I suggest that the serial presentation of the Churchyard tales is the result of a narrative strategy on Wordsworth's part to emphasize repetition and commonality even as these tales offer diversity of experience.[3]

Judson Stanley Lyon reads the Churchyard tales as part of a deliberate strategy on Wordsworth's part. He argues that, not only are the tales in each book designed to affect the reader differently, but also that Wordsworth explicates the desired effect in each book (83). Thus, Lyon argues, Book V contains tales designed to solve doubts in accordance with the Wanderer's injunction to the Pastor (5.630-57). And indeed early editions of The Excursion have the Matron end her description with the sentiment "'--But, above all, my Thoughts are my support'" (1814: 5.831), a confident and individualistic assertion. But when Wordsworth revised The Excursion for the 1845 edition, he not only added an explicitly Christian context for the tale, he also added the possibility of doubt. The revised conclusion to the Matron's tale, for all of the moralizing surrounding it, is moving precisely because of her doubt:

> "'But, above all, my thoughts are my support,
> My comfort:--Would that they were oftener fixed
> On what, for guidance in the way that leads
> To heaven, I know, by my Redeemer taught.'"
> (5.823-26)

The tortured syntax reflects the Matron's struggle to accommodate the realities of her experience to the orthodoxy of revealed religion. Doubt, far from being solved, is accommodated as part of this experience, perhaps because Wordsworth allowed the character of the Matron to develop beyond the stereotype of the pious poor. Lyon suggests that Book VI involves tales designed to excite feelings of love, esteem and admiration (83) although the lines he cites (6.646-74) include the Pastor's warning that there are "'good reasons why we should not leave / Wholly untraced a more forbidding way'" (6.661-62). Book VII, according to Lyon, is supposed to teach patience, but the lines Lyon cites as evidence (7.1054-57) are part of the Wanderer's thanks for all of the tales that the Pastor has told:

> "and 'twere seemlier now
> To stop, and yield our gracious Teacher thanks
> For the pathetic records which his voice
> Hath here delivered; words of heartfelt truth,
> Tending to patience when affliction strikes;
> To hope and love; to confident repose
> In God; and reverence for the dust of Man."
> (7.1051-57)

Whether the subjects of the Pastor's tales have actually demonstrated these virtues is an issue I will explore in these final three chapters. Although Lyon pays attention to the possible effects fostered by the Churchyard tales, he never acknowledges the possibility that the Wanderer and the Pastor may not automatically speak for Wordsworth, any more than he acknowledges that the explicit morals may not be supported by the details of the tales themselves.

Kenneth Johnston pays attention to the relationships between the Churchyard tales. He argues that the tales are organized into pairs. Johnston sees this principle of "complementarity" as being first announced in Book V in the Pastor's acceptance of "'good and evil'" (295) and the Pastor's "preliminary exemplum of the 'sequestered pair' of old folks living on a nearby mountain" (295), the Matron and her husband. He argues that in Books VI and VII there are "four sequences of four stories each, two sequences in each book, divided in the middle of each book by a digressive interlude on method" (297). He further suggests that the second story in each pair "rounds out the exemplum of the first" through complement or contrast (297). Johnston does not address the implications of the Churchyard tales as a series: their cumulative effect and their reductionary potential. He also does not examine what happens when the tales do not balance each other as in the case of the Woodcutter, which Johnston cites as both interlude and tale, and the case of the Widower who remarries, a tale which was removed after the 1820 edition. Johnston briefly mentions that "an unbalancing third domestic tragedy was wisely cut after 1820" (305), without even acknowledging that the subject of this domestic tragedy was another widower and father who found a different route to respectability and happiness. If the Churchyard tales are organized according to relationships between tales, as Johnston argues, so that the Proud Woman's tale is balanced by Ellen's, Wilfred Armathwaite's by the Happy Widower's, it is necessary to address those instances where the scales are unbalanced, where a third version of fatherhood is described or where the space allotted to one of the tales overwhelms its neighbours, as in the case of Ellen.[4] Johnston's argument about the structure of the Churchyard books can be useful in foregrounding Wordsworth's choices and the associations which propel the frame narrative; however, I believe that readers' responses to the Churchyard books are affected by the tales as a series.

Rather than be concerned with which tales are counterparts, I hope to examine the relationships and reverberations among many of the tales in terms of a cumulative series of narratives, which involves both multiplication of exempla and a corresponding reduction to a common denominator. This series reaches back to Book I and the tales of the Wanderer and Margaret, for accumulation of significance can be applied in retrospect. Indeed, one cannot recognize a series until a pattern of elements is repeated and can be identified. In the case of *The Excursion*, the series is a sequence of lives marked by exemplification and repetition. Indeed, I argue that the desire for exemplification on the part of the Wanderer and the Pastor leads to a greater level of repetition as individual differences are overwhelmed by the appended moral. That the specificity of experience in these tales survives to trouble the moral, as in the Matron's tale, suggests that a different reading of the moral, and of *The Excursion*, might be needed, a reading that considers the implications of the series.

Many critics have observed that the Churchyard tales form a series, though fewer critics are willing to include the tales of Margaret and the Wanderer in this series. As early as 1831, John Wilson identified *The Excursion* as "a series of poems" (477) though apparently he was not merely referring to the embedded narratives.[5] Marilyn Butler makes a similar observation about *The Excursion*, arguing that it is "like a series of monologues--or the effective equivalent, a series of lives of individuals. The emphasis is on the separateness of each one of us; social relationships are of small value" (Peacock 70). While Butler is justified in noting the emphasis in many of the tales on isolation, she neglects to consider the power of a series in her observation about the tales of *The Excursion*. For merely placing the tales of "individuals" one after another links these tales, and these "individuals," in the experience of the reader. I use the word "individuals" with quotation marks because, as much as I enjoy the tales, I believe that they are set up in such a way as to work against the forces of individuation, a point to which I will return later in this chapter.

The creation of a poetic series or sequence in *The Excursion* is not a radical departure from convention on Wordsworth's part; one has only to think of the tradition of sonnet sequences, for example, a tradition given a new popularity and a particular elegiac slant by Charlotte Smith and William Lisle Bowles. Most of Wordsworth's own sonnet sequences were written after 1814,[6] but, as Esther Schor points out, sonnet sequences are not irrelevant for *The*

Excursion. Schor suggests that "A generation after Smith and Bowles, the legacy of their autobiographical narratives would appear anew in the elegiac biographies that form the centre of Wordsworth's Excursion" (61). The connection Schor makes between these sonnet sequences and the Churchyard tales is interesting not so much because both are comprised of discrete poetic units combined for a particular effect, though of course that is true, but because both involve appeals to authority which violate decorum.

Schor argues that, while Smith's sonnet sequence targets the moral authority of her audience and Bowles' invokes the moral authority of God (61), "the effort to authorize pathos results in a rupture of pathetic decorum" (7). The tales in The Excursion attempt to appeal both to the moral authority of the audience, represented by but not limited to the listeners in the poem, and the moral authority of God as interpreted by the Pastor and the Wanderer; these two authorities as represented in the poem may well be irreconcilable.[7] Certainly, the reactions of the listeners do not seem to match the expectations of the tellers in the poem, any more than the reactions of many readers seem to have matched Wordsworth's expectations for the poem. And the decorum of elegiac remembrance is violated in *The Excursion* not only by some of the details remembered in the tales but also by some of the subjects. For example, the Pastor recounts the Proud Woman's bitter words on her deathbed against her sister-in-law (6.752-56), hardly the sort of remembrance one expects in this

> "*one* Enclosure where the voice that speaks
> In envy or detraction is not heard;
> Which malice may not enter; where the traces
> Of evil inclinations are unknown;
> Where love and pity tenderly unite
> With resignation; and no jarring tone
> Intrudes, the peaceful concert to disturb
> Of amity and gratitude." (6.638-45)

With the 1845 edition of *The Excursion* Wordsworth has the Pastor try to rescue his tale and the status of the Churchyard by fashioning a suitably repentant and pious end for the Proud Woman in retrospect. The addition of the lines

> "She spake, yet, I believe, not unsustained

> By faith in glory that shall far transcend
> Aught by these perishable heavens disclosed
> To sight or mind. Nor less than care divine
> Is divine mercy. She, who had rebelled,
> Was into meekness softened and subdued;
> Did, after trials not in vain prolonged,
> With resignation sink into the grave" (6.767-74)

introduces elements of religious faith and salvation into this tale of an unrepentant woman, probably in an attempt to avoid criticism of the character, and of the poem, as unchristian. But these speculations on the Pastor's part, based on words overheard and a prolonged illness, are not entirely convincing. She may be "not unsustained" by faith in glory, but the tale itself shows no evidence of her being sustained by faith either. But if, as I will claim in the final chapter, these indecorous subjects are in some sense overdetermined, the series of tales can also be described thus. The tales affect responses to other tales in a way that both heightens the rhetorical effectiveness of the series by making generalizations possible and diminishes the rhetorical effectiveness of individual tales through these generalizations.

Kenneth Johnston argues that the embedded narratives in Wordsworth's Home at Grasmere demonstrate "Wordsworth's characteristic trope of generalization in The Recluse: story-telling to achieve a sense of logical force by rhetorical multiplication" (220). He also notes, however, that "the stories are odd as generalizations . . . because they are so nearly pointless, or require so much special pleading and reading to discern their purpose" (221). Two of these tales actually found their way into The Excursion, the tales of Wilfred Armathwaite and the Widower with six daughters. The lines immediately preceding these tales in Home at Grasmere idealize Grasmere and the "Substantial virtues" (DC MS. 59: 467) it nurtures, a claim at odds with the tale of the character who was to become Wilfred Armathwaite. The tales of Home at Grasmere, like the tales of The Excursion, may gain strength in numbers, but focusing this rhetorical multiplication requires many other elements be cast aside.

I suggest that the Churchyard books in The Excursion go beyond mere addition and subtraction of significance to the multiplication of significance, and therefore also the possibility of division by a common denominator. Christopher Wordsworth's dedication of Ecclesiastical Biography to the Archbishop of Canterbury stresses the power of multiple representations without acknowledging the dangers: "The tendency which has been thus attributed to many of these Lives individually, it was my hope would not be impaired, but augmented, by combining them into one series" (x), but the dangers persist as exemplary biography can only allow certain types of representation. In his project to provide a plethora of exemplary models, Christopher Wordsworth could not acknowledge that repetition and exemplification bring not only augmentation but also reduction; his brother William seems to have been more aware of the effects of multiplication upon exempla. Paul Hamilton identifies the tales of The Excursion as having a "cumulative effect," but one which is costly in terms of character development: "Miscellaneous tragedies merge in an increasingly religious perspective, unaffected by individual differences" (36). I do not agree that the religious perspective is unaffected; indeed I believe it is significantly undermined by the individual differences it tries to subsume as in the case of the Matron or the Proud Woman. But Hamilton does identify a significant tendency in the Churchyard books: multiplication of tales until the significance of the tales themselves begins to be reduced to the level of a common denominator. Individual significance beyond that common denominator has the potential of being too disruptive.

The tale of the Jacobite and Hanoverian can serve as an example of this simultaneous rhetorical multiplication and division. For though these two characters are first introduced as subjects with separate, and quite dramatic, histories of power and disappointment, their fates merge into one at the hands of the Pastor. The tale is told in response to the Solitary's observation that some "'Would rather shun than seek the fellowship / Of kindred mould'" (6.390-91), but the tale demonstrates that anyone can be forced into kindred mould if particular details are elided. Despite cultural and social differences, despite discordant political opinions, despite opposite temperaments, the "'flaming Jacobite / And sullen Hanoverian'" (6.458-59) spend their last years "'in constant fellowship; / And if, at times, they fretted with the yoke, / Those very bickerings made them love it more'" (6.472-74). Indeed, they merge to the extent that they share one grave "'That, undivided, their remains should lie'" (6.502), and one inscription on the folly of "delusive hopes":

> "*Time flies; it is his melancholy task*
> *To bring, and bear away, delusive hopes,*
> *And re-produce the troubles he destroys*.
> *But*, *while his blindness thus is occupied,*
> *Discerning Mortal! do thou serve the will*
> *Of Time's eternal Master, and that peace,*
> *Which the world wants, shall be for thee*
> *confirmed!*" (6.515-521)

Such different experiences as the political ambitions of the Hanoverian and the revolutionary actions of the Jacobite are reduced to the common ground of disappointed hopes. The inscription itself foregrounds issues of repetition as time is described as both destroying and reproducing troubles, a situation all too familiar to the Solitary, and indeed the tale of the Jacobite and Hanoverian is told in response to the Solitary's desire for a tale of someone like him. But the inscription can also apply to other tales of the Churchyard books, including the tales of the Prodigal, Ellen, the Proud Woman, and so on. In fact, the only characters not to have disappointed hopes are those content to have none at all--the Woodcutter, perhaps, who lacks "'The obligation of an anxious mind, / A pride in having, or a fear to lose'" (7.571-72) though even he has enough foresight to go to church (7.576-78). For another element in the inscription is that while time is blind, the discerning mortal is able to see a way around time to eternity. The inscription, like the tale of the Jacobite and Hanoverian, like so many of the Churchyard tales when read in series, is effectively a plea for the status quo, much to the distaste of Shelley and Peacock.

As such, The Excursion participates in an essentially conservative tradition of poetry about the rural poor and makes particular claims about universality of experience. These claims rely in part upon serial presentation.

Before the Pastor turns to any specific grave, he places all within a common, conservative, framework. When the Pastor reflects upon those children who for one reason or another died before baptism, he does so in terms that privilege the connections of a series; not only are they described as "'This file of infants'" (5.946), they serve as prelude for his generalizations about the demographics of the churchyard population, from the "'besprinkled nursling'" (5.954) to those few "'Whose light of reason is with age extinct'" (5.968). The Pastor insists that "'The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last, / The earliest summoned and the longest spared-- / Are here deposited, with tribute paid'" (5.969-71). Any tale of individual circumstances which follows is informed by this emphasis on a universal condition of mortality and its religious implications, an emphasis familiar to the Graveyard School of poetry in the eighteenth century. Such universalism, however, is not innocent of revolutionary implications.

The Pastor describes the churchyard in terms of equality:

> "Within these precincts, a capacious bed
> And receptacle, open to the good
> And evil, to the just and the unjust;
> In which they find an equal resting-place" (5.912-15),

but these sentiments are hardly unexpected; even within the poem, by this point the Poet has already formulated conventional reflections on death's universality as he reads "The ordinary chronicle of birth, / Office, alliance, and promotion--all / Ending in dust" (5.173-75). The Graveyard School of poetry in the eighteenth century emphasized the universal application of death and therefore the need for salvation. William Broome in his "A Poem on Death" argues that death does not recognize rank: "in common heaps she flings / The scrips of beggars and the crowns of kings" (15-16), while Robert Blair in _The Grave_ calls death the "Great _Man-Eater_" (639) but notes that death must render up the dead to God (654).

Yet even as _The Excursion_ makes similar universal claims, as when the Pastor asserts that

> "The faith partaking of those holy times,

Life, I repeat, is energy of love
Divine or human; exercised in pain,
In strife, in tribulation; and ordained,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy"
(5.1011-16),

the particular kind of strife and tribulation which conservative England saw in France and feared at home makes universal claims somewhat dangerous. Wordsworth appears to have been aware of the implications of such universal claims of humanity even if made only about death as he struggles with accounts of revolution in DC MS. 73. This manuscript not only contains material towards the Churchyard books but also towards the Solitary's description of the French Revolution. Is it any wonder then that another tale of strife and tribulation, that of the Jacobite and Hanoverian, found in this manuscript required so much careful revision as the lines describing British politics are reworked over and over again? For example, the passage beginning "But launch thy bark / On the distempered flood of public life" (6.434-35) is reworked at least four times (DC MS. 73 56^v-

58^{v}), while the entire tale is subjected to heavy revision. DC MS. 74, which like DC MS. 73 was probably written between January 1813 and May 1814 (Reed 684), also contains material for the Churchyard books that bears evidence of Wordsworth's cautionary revision of an eighteenth century preoccupation with universality. For even as the manuscript has the flavour of the Graveyard School, beginning with Oswald's funeral and the decaying monument of a knight whose works are undone by time, the conventional wisdom about time's mutability must be carefully phrased. Wordsworth still has the Wanderer assert that

> "Degrees and ranks,
> Fraternities and orders--heaping high
> New wealth upon the burthen of the old,
> And placing trust in privilege confirmed
> And re-confirmed--are scoffed at with a smile
> Of greedy foretaste, from the secret stand
> Of Desolation," (7.988-94)

but these lines are far less provocative than a manuscript version where "'Degrees & Ranks / Classes and orders all are swept away'" (DC MS 74 5^{r}). Wordsworth is careful to ensure that equality of the grave is not confused with any French version of liberté, egalité, fraternité.

The Churchyard tales are placed in a context where individuality is not merely less important than universality, it is dangerous because individual circumstances might lead one astray. Safety, indeed salvation, is in numbers, and that is certainly what the Churchyard books purport to offer. This dual emphasis on universalism and salvation requires that the experience and the sentiments be presented in such a way as to make identification and imitation possible, but at the expense of character. William Minto complains that "though the incidents of their stories are touching, and the sentiments of their narrator are noble and elevating, [the characters in the Pastor's tales] have no distinct individual life, and take no hold on the memory" (448). Minto argues that "The faculty of creating character, if Wordsworth had it, was certainly never developed into an efficient art," using as evidence the exemplary nature of the characters from the Churchyard tales:

> he would seem to have deliberately studied the effacement of individuality in his sketches of human life, treating each life as an instance merely of some good or evil quality, some trait of moral beauty or depravity, a harmony or a discord with the central Good. (448)

Minto does not acknowledge that the tales themselves, regardless of how they are treated by the narrative frame, do much more than illustrate single qualities whether good or evil despite the idealizing tendencies of the Pastor's series, as I will argue in the next two chapters. Wordsworth was also able to create such memorable, and affecting, characters as Margaret and the Solitary for The Excursion, not to mention creation of self in The Prelude. Why then did he rely upon such sequential presentation for such a large portion of the poem?

One somewhat mundane consideration must have been the time and space involved. For the first edition of The Excursion was 9035 lines long, some 1152 lines longer than The Prelude (Lyon 2), and The Prelude only had to deal with the growth of one mind. The Excursion's length was repeatedly criticized by reviewers, of whom Jeffrey was only one of the more ironical: noting that a quarto is required for a ramble of three days, he insists that "by the use of a very powerful calculus, some estimate may be formed of the probable extent of the entire biography" (458). Wordsworth could not have hoped to tell the tales of so many different characters with the same attention to detail and impression that he gives, not only to the creation of his own persona in The Prelude, but to characters like the Solitary, the Wanderer, and even Margaret in The Excursion.

Shortening the length of time and the space required has the effect of increasing the pace of the poem. After a leisurely reflection upon the significance of the Solitary's tale and the remedy for his malaise over the better part of three books, the reader is suddenly exposed to eighteen tales in three books, not even counting the Pastor's generalizations about the population of the churchyard. This population is as diverse as it is numerous, and this diversity gives the impression of a further quickened pace and of an encyclopedic series. William Galperin has noted the encyclopedic value of The Excursion for the nineteenth century and links this value with the Churchyard tales, for, as Galperin argues,

> the Pastor's sixteen epitaphs (nearly 2500 lines in all) not only provide a cross-section of experience in vivid contrast to the uniformity of their 'argument'; they simultaneously affirm the 'solidity' of life over the insubstantiality of its mystifications. ("Anti-Romanticism" 368)

I have discussed this dynamic before in relation to exemplary biography and the Wanderer, but it bears looking at again in relation to a series. Idealization is necessary for any identification with an exemplum, let alone a series of exempla; details must be elided so that the tales can fit the Pastor's, or the Wanderer's, mandate. Part of this mandate, however, is to "'Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts; / For our disputes, plain pictures'" (5.637-38). The specificity of experience is valorized above theoretical abstraction, and so, of necessity, idealization cannot be allowed to obscure completely the "solid facts" of these subjects' lives. Despite the homogenizing pressure of a series, individual tales continue to evoke responses that disrupt the series, a dynamic I will examine in Chapter Seven.

Neither the Pastor nor the Wanderer seems to realize that those solid facts and plain pictures may include images difficult for an audience to reconcile with the moral framework, or that even in truncated form the solid facts of these lives may spark responses beyond those sanctioned by conventional piety. But to assume immediately that Wordsworth was also unaware of the disruptive potential of these tales is too easy; indeed, strategies for deflecting potential criticism of his tales, already discussed in terms of the tales of Margaret, the Wanderer, and the Solitary, continue in the later tales, though in necessarily abbreviated form. The morals and commonplaces tagged onto these tales by both the Pastor and the Wanderer are only the most obvious of these strategies. The Churchyard tales cannot be reduced to these moral statements, no matter how attractive that might be to the Pastor, the Wanderer, or even perhaps Wordsworth. Yet, even leaving aside the moralizing gloss, the tales are undeniably limited in the space and time allowed for their subjects.

Yet this brevity does not prevent some emotional response, in part because of the cumulative effect of tales that have already gone before. I suggest that Wordsworth uses the Churchyard tales as shorthand to trigger the emotional and intellectual responses already experienced by the reader in the tales of Margaret, the Wanderer, and the Solitary, a claim I will develop further in the next chapter. The Pastor, after all, is asked to "'Epitomise the life; pronounce, you can, / Authentic epitaphs'" (5.650-51), where epitomise carries connotations not only of summary but also of culmination. The relationships between tales, between the subjects of these tales, are heightened as the tales are run through in quick succession; the subjects become almost like a series of possible models examined and discarded in turn. But even as the Pastor moves on to the next and then the next tale, the effect of the telling informs future and, through the powers of memory, reshapes past tales.

Notes

1. See David Q. Smith for a very convincing reading of the Wanderer's silence at the end of Book IX. He suggests that the Wanderer and the Pastor do not share the same beliefs, and the Wanderer's silence in response to the Pastor's evening prayer should not be read as simple agreement.

2. I will explore the implications of reading the Pastor's tales as epitaphs in the next chapter.

3. I will suggest in Chapter Six that the Churchyard tales rely upon effects of algebrization in order to promote a particular type of response.

4. In Chapter Seven I examine the tales of the Proud Woman and of Ellen in terms of conventions.

5. Wilson uses his observation as justification for claiming that, although The Excursion is certainly a long poem, it is not a great one for "though it has an opening, it has no beginning; you can discover the middle only by the numerals

on the page; and the most serious apprehensions have been very generally entertained that it has no end" (477).

6. Beth Darlington suggests that Wordsworth used the sonnet sequences as a way to continue The Recluse:

> Despite the scanty plot of ground the sonnet offered him to work in, he attempted to build these sequences out of the sort of philosophical 'meditations in the Author's own Person' which he had once declared would constitute The Recluse. (27)

7. In discussing modern poetic sequences, M. L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall note "the need for encompassment of disparate and often powerfully opposed tonalities and energies" (3), but certainly, the modern era is not the first to experience this need. Rosenthal and Gall acknowledge that sonnet sequences offered one earlier model for poetic sequences (18) but suggest that the modern poetic sequence is essentially lyrical though it may contain narrative or

dramatic elements (9). They go on to argue that if Wordsworth had written in the twentieth century

> there seems little doubt that The Prelude would be compressed into one or more sequences whose separate units were centered on these moments [the spots of time] and juxtaposed without their narrative and discursive links. That is, the finished work would be closer to the separate units out of which it was forged in the first place. (476-77)

Well, maybe. But what a loss that would have been. Wordsworth is trying to structure experience through narration in both The Prelude and The Excursion, and whether or not we approve, we are still stuck with narrative as a primary way of organizing and communicating experience. See Hans Kellner, Language and Historical Representation: Getting the Story Crooked.

Chapter 6:

"from theme to theme the Historian passed": Association in the Churchyard Books

In the previous chapter I described the Churchyard books as subject to two principles that, at first glance, threaten to cancel each other out: the rhetorical multiplication of exempla and their corresponding division by a common denominator. I argued that even as the tales achieve a certain encyclopedic authority through the diversity of subject positions presented, they also are necessarily subject to pressures of homogenization as the Pastor and the Wanderer try to make the tales mean something. The sheer number of tales in the Churchyard books ensures that they cannot receive the same attention to detail that the Solitary's tale, told and retold, commands. But this reduction of time and space does not mean that the tales are without affective power. In fact, the tales are fascinating precisely because they can evoke response, at least at times, with such sparse detail. I will argue in this chapter that such responses are the result of links made between tales. Though the subjects within the tales are often still isolated in their lives as described in the Churchyard books, it is far more difficult for the reader to isolate the tales themselves from the memory of tales which have gone before and the expectation of tales yet to come. The tales are linked by narrative situations, by reactions of characters, and by readers' experiences of reading. I suggest that readers are encouraged to make links between tales through the example of the main characters, though the implications of this example need to be scrutinized. In this chapter I argue that the tales serve as a form of affective shorthand designed to trigger responses already learned earlier in the poem. This shorthand plays upon what Šklovskij and the Russian Formalists have described as algebrization, where algebrization "overautomatizes perception and allows for the greatest economy of perceptive effort" (Prince 4). Of course, Šklovskij condemns algebrization in favour of defamiliarization (11-12). I argue, however, that Wordsworth uses both processes in The Excursion to achieve different effects.[1] Algebrization facilitates certain links between tales, between subjects, and between responses. This economy of perceptive effort is made possible by readers' expectations, but while these expectations may be influenced by responses modelled in The Excursion, they are not limited to such responses. I argue that the shorthand of the Churchyard tales is informed by assumptions about association popularized by aesthetic treatises and by assumptions about the role of epitaphs.

In the Churchyard books, lives are stripped down to their basic elements, or at least what the Pastor and in some cases the Wanderer, consider to be their basic elements. Kenneth Johnston claims that the difference between The Prelude and the Churchyard tales in The Excursion lies in their reliance on the opposite forces of expansion and contraction: he claims that each tale in The Excursion is "in effect an epitaph, the smallest compression of the fullest story" while The Prelude is "the fullest expansion of the most individual story" (287). Yet the Pastor and the Wanderer within The Excursion, and I suggest Wordsworth writing The Excursion, certainly appear to expect an affective response from the audience. According to the

Poet, the Pastor and the Wanderer get a response from their audience, if not necessarily the one for which they were hoping.[2] This response is based on the lessons about response already learned and serves as a possible model for readers' responses to the poem. The Poet, for instance, has no difficulty linking the tale of Ellen with that of Margaret in terms of affective response:

> For me, the emotion scarcely was less strong
> Or less benign than that which I had felt
> When seated near my venerable Friend,
> Under those shady elms, from him I heard
> The story that retraced the slow decline
> Of Margaret, sinking on the lonely heath
> With the neglected house to which she clung.
> (6.1055-61)

Though the tale of Ellen is one of the longest of the Churchyard tales at 265 lines, it is over 200 lines shorter than the tale of Margaret. Yet it provokes an emotion "scarcely less strong / Or less benign." This affective response points to a considerable economy of effort,[3] but it also sparks a retelling of the tale of Margaret and the emotional effect on the listener in seven lines, an even greater economy made possible by the cumulative nature of the tales in The Excursion.

The Poet is not alone in making emotional and intellectual connections between tales. Indeed, when the Wanderer thanks the Pastor for all the tales told, he does so in terms which stress the cumulative effect such "'pathetic records'" (7.1053) may have: "'Thoughts crowd upon me'" (7.1051). The Poet explains this cumulative effect in terms of memory. The occasion for this explanation is a comparison of the Pastor with a minstrel-like figure from the Poet's childhood. The memory of the minstrel figure is triggered by the series of tales that are told by the Pastor in the Churchyard:

> While thus from theme to theme the Historian passed,
> The words he uttered, and the scene that lay
> Before our eyes, awakened in my mind
> Vivid remembrance. (7.1-4)

For as the Poet learned from that minstrel so long ago, a tale or a song heard before can have a permanent influence on the listener:

> And, when the stream
> Which overflowed the soul was passed away,
> A consciousness remained that it had left,
> Deposited upon the silent shore
> Of memory, images and precious thoughts,
> That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed.
> (7.25-30)

Wordsworth articulates a similar realization of the affective power of memory in The Prelude when he argues that the soul "Remembering how she felt, but what she felt / Remembering not, retains an obscure sense / Of possible sublimity" (2.316-18). Memory becomes linked to aesthetic response in a move reminiscent of eighteenth-century theories of association.

Whether or not Wordsworth subscribed to associationist psychology has been debated for much of the twentieth century. As Theodore L. Huguelet notes, while it is possible to ascertain the influence that David Hartley's Observations on Man had upon Coleridge in the 1790s, "there is no direct evidence that Wordsworth read much in the Observations on Man" (xvi). Arthur Beatty, however, argues that Wordsworth translates David Hartley's ideas into poetry, though he does so in part by assuming Wordsworth shared Coleridge's enthusiasms in all things. Beatty suggests, for example, that the Solitary will only be cured by correcting "the very currents of his being, or go[ing] through some experience which will induce 'a healthful state of association'" (246). Melvin Rader refutes Beatty by arguing that Coleridge abandoned associationism and necessitarianism in 1801 (12) and then convinced Wordsworth to do the same (20-21). Hartley's theories of association lead to the notion of mechanism or necessity in human actions, as he himself acknowledges in the conclusion to the first volume of Observations on Man. Rader uses Wordsworth's belief in the "active role of human faculties" (21) as evidence that Wordsworth supported the notion of free will. I will argue, however, that the characters within the Churchyard books still seem in some sense determined by their circumstances, their environment. Rader traces other philosophical influences on Wordsworth, including transcendentalism. He suggests that Wordsworth and Coleridge modified and subordinated associationism (29). As Keith Thomas notes, however, the either/or debate over Wordsworth's empiricism and transcendentalism is impossible to resolve. Thomas argues that Wordsworth uses and resists both philosophical tendencies throughout his career. I have no desire to recreate Wordsworth's philosophical position. Indeed I doubt that he ever had a consistent one that could be recreated. But David Hartley's ideas about association provide a particular perspective on The Excursion, a poem in large part about perception and response.

David Hartley argues that sensation is the result of particles vibrating along the nerves to the brain (1.11-12). These vibrations produce imprints in the brain, which, when reinforced by repetition, becomes simple ideas (1.56). He further suggests that these simple ideas can become associated with other each other through repetition. As Hartley argues,

> Any Sensations A, B, C, &c. by being associated with one another a sufficient Number of Times, get such a Power over the corresponding Ideas a, b, c, &c. that any one of the Sensations A, when impressed alone, shall be able to excite in the Mind b, c, &c. the Ideas of the rest. (1.65)

These simple ideas can also combine to form complex ones through the process of association (1.73). While the physiological basis of Hartley's theories is now primarily interesting as an object of curiosity, his description of a psychological process of association and its role in the production of emotion remains pertinent to Romanticism. David Miall, for example, has argued that Hartley "set the course for Coleridge's thinking on a set of issues relating to feeling" (151). While I do not want to follow Beatty in assuming that Wordsworth followed Coleridge in all things, Wordsworth in The Excursion is interested in issues relating to feeling and response.

David Hartley's physiologically based theory was picked up by aesthetic theorists examining the emotions triggered by the aesthetic appreciation of objects. That Wordsworth was interested in the ongoing debate on the nature of aesthetic response is evident from the fragment "On the Sublime and the Beautiful;" thus, he would have been aware of theories of association through aesthetic treatises on the sublime, if not through associationist philosophy directly. Edmund Burke's A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, now renowned for its explanations of which objects are inherently sublime or beautiful,[4] claims that one, though not the ultimate, cause of the sublime and the beautiful is association (143-44). In doing so, however, Burke was certainly not alone. Archibald Alison argues for a direct relationship between the number of associations and the strength of the emotion felt: "the more that our ideas are increased or our conceptions extended upon any subject, the greater the number of associations we connect with it, the stronger is the emotion of sublimity or beauty we receive from it" (25), where these associations may be personal, national, professional, or arising from habits of thought. While Richard Payne Knight complains that Alison reduces everything to the principle of association (307), he still believes not only that beauty and sublimity are inherent qualities in objects, but also that the number of associations determines the sphere of intellectual pleasure: "As all the pleasures of intellect arise from the association of ideas, the more the materials of association are multiplied, the more will the sphere of these pleasures be enlarged" (143). Thus, association has a cumulative effect in terms of the intensity and the range of response.

Wordsworth's own contribution to this debate about the nature of the sublime is articulated in a prose fragment composed sometime between September 1811 and November 1812, a period when he was also thinking about The Excursion.[5] Theresa Kelley argues that Wordsworth was influenced by the aesthetic categories of the sublime and the beautiful throughout his career but posits a general movement from sublime to beautiful; she suggests, for instance, that The Excursion "subdues aesthetic conflict in the name of the beautiful" (133). Like Burke, Kelley links the beautiful with society, arguing that "By undermining those sublime figures or speakers that purport to act outside ideology and thus outside history, the beautiful insists that it structures and is structured by history and culture" (136). Wordsworth certainly supported the idea of the sublime evolving into the beautiful in landscape in his Guide through the District of the Lakes (181). Alan Bewell suggests that Wordsworth saw Man and Nature working on each other, again moving from sublime to beautiful forms (239, 274-79). Before such arguments lead to a privileging of the earlier works as more sublime, I would like to turn to Wordsworth's essay on "The Sublime and the Beautiful." I suggest that the ideas about aesthetic response expressed in the fragment offer a way of thinking about the associations that tellers and audience make in the Churchyard books because, in this essay, Wordsworth departs from Edmund Burke's formulation of the sublime by placing more emphasis on the mental processes and less on the objects themselves. He argues that "preparatory intercourse with that object or with others of the same kind" is needed for the experience of sublimity to be possible (359). He also argues that the same object can eventually be experienced as both sublime and beautiful (349). When an object is new to the beholder, it appears sublime; only gradually do associations of beauty gather to the object in the mind of the individual (360). Thus, not only must the individual's taste be trained by previous experience, the experience itself will gradually change over time through a series of associations, a theory with practical implications for the series of tales presented in The Excursion.

The Excursion's tales rely upon what Paul H. Fry has described as a "surprisingly cautious linkage of neighbouring ideas . . . [where] no link is suppressed metaleptically" (420). Fry argues that

> The Excursion is a social poem that implicitly rebukes the solitary impertinence of vision. Metonymy replaces metalepsis, the total syntax of life's relations replaces the privileged Spot of Time, and the mutual shoring up of configurations replaces the freestanding figure of the seer. Expressiveness is repressed, and the sublime is written off in being written over by its epitaph. (431)

Fry, however, does not acknowledge that, for Wordsworth, the sublime and the beautiful could coexist. Iris Murdoch in "The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited" argues that an author needs not only to find a form, but "to prevent that form from becoming rigid by the free expansion against it of the individual characters" (271). I believe this dynamic does occur in The Excursion, despite the best efforts of the Pastor and the Wanderer to contain the characters they describe. Wordsworth seems to allow space for different perspectives, different perceptions, in The Excursion. The Pastor is able to describe the churchyard from two perspectives, one of "'wintry cheerlessness and gloom'" (5.538) and one "'All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright, / Hopeful and cheerful'" (5.546-47). The Wanderer links perception with experience, particularly emotional experience, arguing that "'We see, then, as we feel'" (5.558) and that

"Moral truth
Is no mechanic structure, built by rule;
And which, once built, retains a stedfast shape
And undisturbed proportions; but a thing

> Subject, you deem, to vital accidents." (5.562-66)

These vital accidents are the matter of the Churchyard tales, linked by association, gaining affective power through association. The Poet in The Excursion, after all, praises the Pastor for "Exalting tender themes, by just degrees / To lofty raised; and the highest, last" (6.83-84). Wordsworth in the first "Essay upon Epitaphs" describes the connection "formed through the subtle progress by which, both in the natural and the moral world, qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things revolve upon each other" (53). I suggest that the Churchyard tales are designed to permit the mind to pass by smooth gradation to other kindred tales, to paraphrase Wordsworth's third "Essay Upon Epitaphs" (81). These kindred tales participate in a system of associations where, as Hans Robert Jauss suggests, "The new text evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, altered, or even just reproduced" ("Literary" 23). The associations and expectations each new tale evokes link the tales in terms of response, in terms of significance.

One of many associative threads in the Churchyard books is formed of tales about priests, beginning with the Pastor. Keith Thomas argues that the Pastor, "as the voice of religious authority, needs no biography" (151), but an abbreviated one which includes information on his piety, his educational background, and his family wealth (5.98-132), is nonetheless provided before the reader meets him. This information lays the foundation for his authority and for future responses to his tales. The other tales about priests do not occur until Book VII but are anticipated by positive images of the Church. Thus, the Poet's praise of the established church as

> Founded in truth; by blood of Martyrdom
> Cemented; by the hands of Wisdom reared
> In beauty of holiness, with ordered pomp
> Decent and unreproved, (6.9-12)

attributes positive characteristics not only for the Pastor, but also for the ministers he describes and the churchyard in which he describes them. Theories about association suggest that images or experiences need not be simultaneous to be associated with each other. Huguelet suggests that it is enough that the sensations be successive, as in this series of tales, or synchronous (x), as in the relationship between the characters of the frame and those of the tales. Memory allows associations to multiply within the mind, within the poem. These associations call into effect the process of algebrization, where algebrization involves the habituation and economy of perception (Šklovskij 12). I suggest that it also permits the accumulation of significance. Thus the first tale of Book VII, the history of the Courtier-priest (7.31-291), sparks an account of another priest, a priest whose identity can be represented by a simple epithet--"'the WONDERFUL'" (7.344). The wisdom attributed to the Pastor, the praise uttered by the Poet, the productive life of the Courtier-Priest, even the example of the Wanderer, contribute to the effect of this short description of "That lowly, great, good Man" (7.352).[6]

Another associative thread could be traced among models of fatherhood in the Churchyard books, including Wilfred Armathwaite who betrays his family (6.1073-1114), the

Widower who raises six daughters alone (6.1115-91), another Widower, excised after the 1820 edition, who remarries wisely (1814: 6.1233-1308), the Courtier-Priest who outlives his family, and the father and grandfather of little Margaret of Goldrill who rejoice in her life and mourn her death (7.632-94). But the links between images of fathers extend back throughout the poem, with Robert, who certainly abandoned his family more decisively than Wilfred Armathwaite did, with the Solitary who lost both wife and children but who cannot accept their deaths, and with Wordsworth himself who wrote of his own grief at the deaths of his children in terms much more convincing than the conventional comparison of the grave with a peaceful bed that concludes the tale of Margaret of Goldrill (7.694). These earlier models provide a context for responding to the tales of fatherhood in the Churchyard books, tales not given in as much detail but still capable of evoking a response. I suggest that this response is in part made possible by previous associations and the process of algebrization. Šklovskij suggests that by the "'algebraic' method of thought we apprehend objects only as shapes with imprecise extensions; we do not see them in their entirety but rather recognize them by their main characteristics" (11). I believe that a similar process occurs with the Churchyard tales. Šklovskij, however, goes on to argue that "ultimately even the essence of what it [the object] was is forgotten" (11) through the process of algebrization. Yet the "silhouette" criticized by Šklovskij (11) sounds much like Wordsworth's recommendation for epitaphs, his preference for bold outlines over scrupulous detail ("Essays Upon Epitaphs" I: 58).

The Excursion itself has often been described in terms of epitaphs. Paul Hamilton notes that "Often the reader is made to feel that The Excursion approximates to a series of epitaphs" (142), but also recognizes that "to pronounce an epitaph is to declare a beginning as well as an end" (143). This realization does not prevent Hamilton from claiming that The Excursion is Wordsworth's "own enormous epitaph, but followed this time by no new beginning" (147-48). I suggest that, while perhaps the "afterlife" of Wordsworth's career after The Excursion may not be what many readers today desire, to deny Wordsworth a new beginning is too limiting, given the body of work he produced. Describing The Excursion as an epitaph, or as a series of epitaphs, however, is understandable given Wanderer's desire for "'authentic epitaphs'" (5.651) and Wordsworth's interest in the genre.

Wordsworth, after all, wrote three essays on epitaphs, the first of which was published in The Friend in 1810 and reprinted with revisions as a note to Book V of The Excursion. The version published in The Friend describes its function in terms of aesthetic response and readers' capabilities; it proposes "to tempt the more practised Reader into a short prelusive exercise of powers," prelusive, that is, to systematic discussion of the "Laws of Taste and Criticism" (49). The third essay concludes with an excerpt from The Excursion, the tale of the Deaf Dalesman, which Wordsworth claims was suggested to him by "a concise Epitaph" (93). In these essays Wordsworth suggests that an epitaph should "speak, in a tone which shall sink into the heart, the general language of humanity as connected with the subject of death--the source from which an epitaph proceeds--of death and of life," but also that this general language must be balanced by "sensations excited by a distinct and clear conception, conveyed to the reader's mind, of the individual, whose death is deplored and whose memory is to be preserved" (57). These two apparently contradictory demands--to speak the general language of humanity and to speak of the individual--can partially explain the tension surrounding the Churchyard tales. For despite the temptation to call these tales epitaphs, William Galperin notes that

> to the extent that the sixteen epitaphs in _The Excursion_ demonstrate Wordsworth's theory of the genre in his famous essay on the subject, it is by counterexample: they perform an "anatomical" rather than "monumental" function in their "dissect[ion of] the internal frame of mind" (_Prose Works_, II 57). The epitaphs in _The Excursion_ are truly "negations," reminding the reader that while life may often be subjected to various idealizations, the representation of life requires a different kind of memorial--and memory

> --less in keeping with the intentions of a given authority.[7] (Revision 52)

The Pastor's and the Wanderer's attempts to place these tales in an uplifting context threaten to overwhelm either the individual tale with a moralizing gloss or the uplifting truth the tale is supposed to illustrate.

Paul Fry offers another observation on epitaphs which can be useful when examining the Churchyard books. He emphasizes both the power of association and barriers upon which epitaphs are constructed when he argues that

> The Wordsworthian epitaph is a narrowing, a metonymic crossing of the bar, but the bar is not suppressed; rather it is emphasized. Without the snowy tombstone there could be no contrast of north and south, without the intervening figure of the statue there could be no relation between the Solitary and the urn. (421)

Without the epitaph, or the tale, there could be no relation between the living and the dead, but the epitaph and tale separate the living and the dead. As Alan Bewell notes, the living talk and the dead are talked about (233). The Pastor himself privileges tales of the dead because with these

> "The future cannot contradict the past:
> Mortality's last exercise and proof
> Is undergone; the transit made that shows
> The very Soul, revealed as she departs." (5.664-67)

Such revelation may be articulated in the commonplace of epitaph, in the same old warnings about time and mutability that are so frequent in the poetry of the Graveyard School, but the commonplace can still be affecting. Even the Solitary must confess that the epitaph of the Jacobite and the Hanoverian, with its warning to serve "*Time's eternal master*" (6.520), does not leave him unmoved as it is smooth verse and accords with nature's language (6.522-29). The inscription is described as nature's language not because it is a naturalistic transcription of speech--note the archaic pronouns "*thou*" and "*thee*" (6.519, 521)--but because it articulates a commonplace. Such commonplaces as are often found in epitaphs may even act to reinforce associations to other uplifting ideas, other uplifting sentiments. In the second "Essay Upon Epitaphs" Wordsworth insists that "it is not only no fault but a primary requisite in an Epitaph that it shall contain thoughts and feelings which are in their substance common-place or even trite" precisely because such commonplaces articulate "sensations which all men have felt and feel in some degree daily and hourly" (78). This insistence on the value of the commonplace puts Jeffrey's criticism of The Excursion for harping upon "a few very simple and familiar ideas" (459) or Coleridge's irritation with The Excursion's commonplace truths ("To William Wordsworth" 576) in a new perspective. Like epitaphs which risk being called trite because they involve "truths whose very interest and importance have caused them to be unattended to, as things which could take care of themselves" ("Essay Upon Epitaphs, II" 78), the pious sentiments expressed in the Churchyard books are all too common, not only in frequency, though many a modern reader has wished the Pastor would just get on with the tales, but also in subject matter. In the next chapter, I will look at what happens in the Churchyard tales when the commonplaces do not hold for specific tales, specific subject positions.

But Wordsworth needs to include, or at least to try to include, all members of a community in his associative scheme. Fry argues that

> For Wordsworth in 1810 and thereafter, to have faith is to believe that while the angels may see all things and conditions as one, the human mind, with its 'excursive power' (iv.1263), at best may catch reflections of that vision in seeing all things as leaning on one another in a vast associative figure, a syntax linked one step at a time through a gradation or sloping countryside of differences. (421)

What Fry does not address is that this associative figure, this syntax of connections, involves response and responsibility. For when Wordsworth praises the process of gradual transition above antithesis in his third "Essay Upon Epitaphs," he does so in terms of aesthetic and ethical response; antithesis is inappropriate to the moral sensitivity involved in creating and appreciating epitaphs (80-81).[8] But such sensitivity is still determined by class, as is the existence of a grave marker on which to inscribe an epitaph.

There are in fact remarkably few written epitaphs mentioned, let alone recounted, in The Excursion. The Poet notes that the Churchyard is "almost wholly free / From interruption of sepulchral stones" (6.607-08). Still, The Poet, Wanderer, and Solitary are described reading epitaphs before the Pastor enters the scene (5.171-205); the epitaphs they read are on the tombs of pages, knights, and ladies. As the Poet explains, there is really

> No need to speak
> Of less particular notices assigned
> To Youth or Maiden gone before their time,
> And Matrons and unwedded Sisters old;
> Whose charity and goodness were rehearsed
> In modest panegyric. (5.200-05)

Those who could not even afford a stone are completely forgotten, or would be without the oral tradition which supplants the "faded narrative" (5.207) of the epitaph. Esther Schor distinguishes between "the institutional, scriptural epitaphs discussed in the Essays Upon Epitaphs and the orally transmitted epitaphs of The Excursion" where the difference is in "the criterion of epitaphic 'sincerity' in the Essays and that of epitaphic 'authenticity' in The Excursion" (179). She argues that while the criterion of sincerity is derived from rhetorical criticism of elegiac verse (179), the "authentic" epitaph "insofar as it is oral, . . . transmits traditions more broadly across the social spectrum than does the written epitaph" (180). The Poet of The Excursion decides that the oral record is superior:

> "These Dalesmen trust
> The lingering gleam of their departed lives
> To oral record, and the silent heart;
> Depositories faithful and more kind
> Than fondest epitaph: for, if those fail,
> What boots the sculptured tomb?" (6.610-15),

a sentiment echoed by the village priest in "The Brothers." In that poem, Leonard counts the family graves in a file in an attempt to determine if his brother lives (83-84) but is confused by the unnamed graves: "An orphan could not find his mother's grave" (169). The priest though assures him that here they have no need of memorial stones because "We talk about the dead by our fire-sides" (179).

Tilottama Rajan argues that epitaphs and tombstones identify and encrypt the dead, creating a boundary between the living and the dead, while unnamed graves "elide the scandal of individual death" (Supplement 164). The unnamed graves in "The Brothers," as in The Excursion, mean that an interpreter is required. As the priest in "The Brothers" observes,

> "Why can he tarry yonder?--In our church-yard
> Is neither epitaph nor monument,
> Tombstone nor name--only the turf we tread
> And a few natural graves." (12-15)

The "Pause courteous Stranger" convention of epitaph, both gently censured (60-61) and praised (89) by Wordsworth in the "Essays Upon Epitaphs," includes the traveller who might be passing, but without the stone or an interpreter, the grave is as mute as the Deaf Dalesman. The Solitary argues that

> "If this mute earth
> Of what it holds could speak, and every grave

> Were as a volume, shut, yet capable
> Of yielding its contents to eye and ear,
> We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame."
> (5.250-54)

The oral tale or written epitaph provides a filter which shields the individual from such sinister revelation. Paul De Man, however, argues that the fiction of the epitaph itself is sinister, that the "surmise of the 'Pause, Traveller!' . . . acquires a sinister connotation that is not only the prefiguration of one's own mortality but our actual entry into the frozen world of the dead" (928). But he does so by eliding the communal purpose of epitaphs. When quoting Wordsworth on prosopopeia (927), he leaves out Wordsworth's reflections on how such "tender fiction[s]" operate, how the worlds of the living and the dead are united, namely "by their appropriate affections" (60). These affections are fostered by association, the association of the living and the dead, of tender sympathies, of kindred tales in the Churchyard books. Of course, Wordsworth's insistence upon the association of the living and the dead carries with it certain conservative assumptions about generations living in the same place, sharing similar political and religious views. In the Churchyard books I believe that Wordsworth tries to use the association of the living and the dead to foster a set of aesthetic and emotional responses in his audience.

For if as Wordsworth suggests in his "Essays upon Epitaphs" "a parish-church, in the stillness of the country, is a visible centre of a community of the living and the dead; a point to which are habitually referred the nearest concerns of both" (I: 56), then the associations between living and dead made by an epitaph strengthen the entire community, include the entire community. In Wordsworth's "Essays Upon Epitaphs," the churchyard is idealized as the "one Enclosure where the voice of detraction is not heard; where the traces of evil inclinations are unknown; where contentment prevails, and there is no jarring tone in the peaceful concert of amity and gratitude" (II: 64), sentiments repeated almost word for word in The Excursion (6.638-44). For the link between place and life seems particularly strong in this place of death.

James Chandler discusses the importance of place in the Churchyard tales in comparison with the spots of time in The Prelude. Chandler focuses on the tales as "traditionary counterparts" (207) to the spots of time, arguing that

> the spot narratives in both poems give us a present fact (the spot) in association with present feelings that are obscurely representative of some past fact--an experience of the joy of nature in the first case and of the worth of another person in the second. (210)

He argues, however, that "The task of comparison is best approached by considering what is understood as a 'spot' in each use" (208). The spots of time within The Prelude exist through the poet's imagination and "can be made visible to his audience . . . likewise in imagination" while "those in The Excursion might not be noticed by the uninitiated but they can be seen by anyone" (208). These spots in The Excursion can only be interpreted through association with other tales, with other genres like the epitaph, with the place itself. Mikhail Bakhtin has identified the idyllic chronotope as a special relation of time to space where a life and its events are grafted to a place (225). This idyllic chronotope is also characterized by a unity of place over generations, a limiting to only a few of life's basic realities, and a linking of human life with that of nature (225-26). It is a description that is eerily familiar to me as I reread the Churchyard tales, tales of individuals reduced to a few lines inscribed by place.

For these Churchyard books demonstrate what Keith Thomas has called "a vigorous environmental determinism, a strong sense of how nature in a particular place determines the conditions of people's lives by bringing them poverty or bounty, adversity to be overcome or opportunities to be seized" (164). The churchyard can only be ideal, or even idyllic, by being in some sense deterministic. The tales within the Churchyard books are told for specific reasons: to teach the Solitary and the Poet, to teach the reader perhaps. But the Pastor and the Wanderer do not address what happens when the tales contradict the conventions and the moral lessons we are all supposed to be learning, let alone what happens when only some members of the community meet the expectations of a polite readership, issues I will explore in the following chapter.

Notes

1. See Chapter Two for a discussion of how Wordsworth uses defamiliarization in the tale of Margaret.

2. They aim, of course, to reconvert the Solitary to the world, but, as Chapter 4 suggests, such reconversion is at best temporary, always leaving open the possibility of a sequel.

3. I will suggest in the next chapter that part of this economy of effort in the tale of Ellen is based on its use of literary conventions about the abandoned woman.

4. William Gilpin argues for the inclusion of a third category, the picturesque. Gilpin argues that, while smoothness may be a considerable source of beauty as Burke suggests, "*roughness* forms the most essential point of difference between the *beautiful* and the *picturesque*" (6). He also notes that "*Sublimity alone* cannot make an object *picturesque*. However grand the mountain, or the rock may be, it has no claim to this epithet, unless it's form, it's

colour, or it's accompaniments have some degree of beauty" (43).

5. The fragment was probably originally intended to be part of The Guide Through the District of the Lakes but was not published until 1974.

6. The notes to "The River Duddon" sonnet series describe the biographical model, Reverend Walker, in great detail and to a very different effect.

7. W. B. J. Owen and J. W. Smyser offer a contradictory assessment of the tales as epitaphs. They argue that while the Churchyard tales are "hardly epitaphs, [they] are often congruous with the recommendations for character-portrayal which the Essays provide" (46); yet they also describe the tales as "portraits" (46) while Wordsworth insists that the writer of an epitaph "is not even a painter, who executes a portrait at leisure and in entire tranquillity" (I: 57-58).

8. Wordsworth insists that

> If then a Man, whose duty it is to praise departed excellence not without some sense of regret or sadness, to do this or to be silent, should upon all occasions exhibit that mode of connecting thoughts which is only natural while we are delineating vice under certain relations, we may be assured that the nobler sympathies are not alive in him; that he has no clear insight into the internal constitution of virtue; nor has himself been soothed, cheared, harmonized, by those outward effects which follow every where her goings,--declaring the presence of the invisible deity. (III: 81)

The problem with antithesis is its associations with satire and its inability to provoke the appropriate emotions, emotions which soothe, cheer, and harmonize.

Chapter 7:

Life "fashioned like an ill-constructed tale": Expectations and The Excursion

I have argued that tales in the Churchyard books are written in a kind of affective shorthand, that a response is expected based on tales previously experienced, and that the effect of the tales is cumulative throughout The Excursion. Even the Solitary is not immune to these brief tales of life and death delivered in a churchyard, or so the Poet claims. For the Poet repeatedly interprets the Solitary's emotional state based upon his own responses with each blush and shrug interpreted in terms of the tales told.[1] But the Solitary himself has something to say about his affective reactions in the churchyard and about the necessity of appropriate stimuli for such reactions. The Solitary complains that he is summoned "'From some affecting images and thoughts'" (5.240) by the presence and voice of a "'churl'" (5.234), the sexton. The Solitary is so bothered by his presence in fact that he leaves the church with its epitaphs for the open air and, ironically, for the tales of those who share the social status of sexton.[2] The Solitary's reaction demonstrates what happens to affective response when the associations are disrupted, when the ideal response is violated by specifics, a situation that occurs more frequently in The Excursion than many, including the characters within the poem, are willing to admit. For if, as Jan Mukařovský suggests, "the work of art always disturbs (sometimes slightly, sometimes considerably) an aesthetic norm which is valid for a given moment of artistic development" (Aesthetic 35), there is also a certain amount of resistance in the responses to the work of art when expectations are disappointed. In this chapter I will examine some of the "inappropriate" responses to the embedded narratives before exploring conventions that dictate response in a tale like Ellen's. I then examine characters which violate conventional expectations, characters like the Proud Woman and Oswald. I conclude this chapter by looking at the sometimes inexplicable conclusions to the tales of The Excursion and suggesting that their very oddity may contain a lesson for readers of The Excursion.

Inappropriate responses to the embedded narratives are articulated by, but not limited to, the Solitary at several different points in The Excursion. For example, in Book V the Solitary reacts to the tale of the Matron by attributing her success to the fact that she was not "'summoned to contend for virtue's prize'" (5.856) and telling the tale of a Scottish peasant. The Poet interprets the Solitary's reactions as opposition to the Pastor and as stimulus for further tales:

> Undeterred,
> Perhaps incited rather, by these shocks,
> In no ungracious opposition given
> To the confiding spirit of his own
> Experienced faith, the reverend Pastor said,
> Around him looking; 'Where shall I begin?'
> (5.892-97)

Tales beget tales and further tales, but not always ones capable of eliciting expected responses. With the tales of the Jacobite and the Hanoverian, the Solitary again reacts with tales but ones that the Pastor cannot sanction. Faced with the inscription warning of Time's powers, the Solitary admits that he is moved (6.527-29), but what he is moved to do is to challenge the Pastor's faith through myth:

> "Say why
> The ancient story of Prometheus chained
> To the bare rock, on frozen Caucasus;
> The vulture, the inexhaustible repast
> Drawn from his vitals? Say what is meant the woes
> By Tantalus entailed upon his race,
> And the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes?
> Fictions in form, but in their substance truths,
> Tremendous truths?" (6.538-46)

The Solitary then argues that even here in this valley humanity struggles "'in vain with ruthless destiny'" (6.557). The Pastor rejects such terms, and tales, with the admission that "'human life abounds / With mysteries'" (6.562-63) and the refusal to talk "'Of Man degraded in his Maker's sight / By the deformities of brutish vice'" (6.574-75). But the Solitary is not alone in his inappropriate responses. There are also all those times when readers read more into a tale than the Pastor and the Wanderer seem willing to allow or to authorize with their moralizing gloss on the tales.

William Galperin argues for the presence of an "insuperable gulf between what each [of the main characters] perceives to be the facts of life and the 'solid facts' themselves" ("'Imperfect'" 202) by focusing on the disjunctions surrounding the Matron's tale in Book V. He claims that what the Wanderer and the Pastor

> "give us" are not simply "abstractions" that have little basis in fact, but abstractions that have somehow taken the place of facts--reversions, if you will, to the "aery alchem[y]" (633) that the Wanderer was especially at pains to avoid. ("'Imperfect'" 204)

David Bromwich comes to a similar conclusion about the tale of the Proud Woman as told in Book VI.[3] Bromwich argues that by the end of the Proud Woman's tale "she has become more interesting to us than any inference Wordsworth can possibly draw from her way of life" (169). Bromwich goes on to claim that

> with the rest of the poem in view, and the gravity of its concern for "Despondency Corrected," the moral of the Matron's [Proud Woman's] tragedy may easily enough be guessed. She withdrew herself from the life and affections of a community, and Wordsworth, in response, would prefer to have excluded her from the poem (170),

a claim that I will dispute both in terms of the moral and Wordsworth's preferences. Still, for many readers, these characters seem to exceed the significance assigned to them by the Wanderer and the Pastor. These characters, I will argue, do not fit into the roles they are expected to play by the audience within and outside of the fictional world of The Excursion.

Despite the modern critical interest that the Matron and the Proud Woman have excited, however, they were the subjects of remarkably little comment in earlier reviews. Bromwich claims that "We know that the episode [of the Proud Woman] interested Hazlitt since he quotes the lines about those tragedies that await our discovery even in the humblest life" (170), but Hazlitt does not quote the tale of the Proud Woman itself. Indeed, Hazlitt is critical of Wordsworth's choice of low characters (636) but praises the sections on mythology and modern philosophy (556). Hazlitt does single out the tales of Sir Alfred Erthing, the Jacobite, and the Hanoverian as worthy of notice in the latter part of The Excursion (638), but these characters have considerably more social status than the Proud Woman or most of the inhabitants of the churchyard.

Hazlitt's preference for those characters with higher status at the expense of characters like the Woodcutter or the Widower should not be surprising, given the emphasis on philosophy over narrative in his review. What might be more surprising is how similar the preferences of other reviewers are, except when it comes to those female characters who can please through pathos. Almost all of the reviews cite the tale of Margaret or Ellen; almost all comment upon them with approval, at least if they comment upon anything in The Excursion with approval. Jeffrey notes that the tale of Margaret offers pleasing pathos, if readers can get over their repugnance about the triteness and lowness of the subject matter (460). He then quotes the tale of Margaret at great length (464-65). Ellen's tale is also quoted as it is "told with great sweetness, pathos, and indulgence" (Jeffrey 466). Charles Lamb and William Gifford also note the pathos of the tale of Ellen (108) as does the reviewer for The British Critic, who describes Ellen as "the forsaken penitent" (462), and the reviewer for The British Review, who describes the tale as "enchantingly poetical and tender" (233). The review in Variety quotes the passage which describes Margaret sighing while the review in the Belle Assemblée consists primarily of extracts from the tales of Margaret and of Ellen.

Not all reviewers concentrated on Ellen and Margaret to the expense of the other female characters, though the attention paid to the Matron or the Proud Woman, for example, is different in amount and kind. The Monthly Magazine, which offers over ten pages of excerpts from The Excursion, quotes the tales of Margaret and Ellen at length, but also offers a short quotation from the Matron's tale (646). James Montgomery claims that "a more pathetic tale than . . . [Margaret's tale] was never told" (360), and that the tale of Ellen "will not yield in tender or tragic interest to any one of the innumerable stories of seduction and desertion, which abound in prose and rhyme" (363). However he also quotes the tale of the Proud Woman, introducing her as "A termagant Woman, of masculine intellect, but sordid views" (363).[4] The Proud Woman, even when mentioned, does not receive the same approval that Margaret or Ellen do, in part because she violates feminine ideals by being both "masculine" and "sordid," in part because she does not participate in the literary conventions of the abandoned woman.

As Marilyn Butler notes, abandoned women were among the popular literary characters of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Romantics 31). Karen Swann makes this same point in reference to the character of Margaret: "Margaret stems as much from literature as from life, and most immediately from the hosts of abandoned and suffering women who people sensational fiction and monthly-magazine poetry of the late eighteenth century" (84). But more than just sensational fiction and periodical poetry exploited the figure of the abandoned woman. Thomas Amory's The Life and

Opinions of John Buncle, Esquire includes among its many tales figures of abandoned women.[5] John Buncle describes the life and death of Elizabeth Hunt: a woman from a respectable family who is seduced, becomes pregnant, loses her child, becomes a kept woman, and dies of breast cancer (296). It also tells a more spectacular version of ruin, though one with a happy ending, in the tale of Carola Bennet whose aunt sold her to brothel where she was drugged and raped. She lives as a prostitute until a clergyman falls in love with her and reforms her (400). John Thelwall's The Peripatetic; Or, Sketches of the Heart provides an economic fairy tale about an abandoned woman who has more in common with Margaret than Ellen. The Peripatetic recounts how a pregnant woman whose weaver husband has been pressed into the navy is given alms by Philanthropa; the woman uses the money to buy earthenware pots and is able to reinvest her profits until she owns her own shop (3.144). A similarly practical, though incredibly optimistic, conclusion to the tale of Margaret would not have served Wordsworth's purposes in The Ruined Cottage or in The Excursion, any more than Ellen could have married the father of her child or the sympathetic Pastor. Wordsworth needs the pathos even as he tries to elicit more from the reader. He needs the literary and aesthetic tradition of the abandoned woman to prepare readers' reactions and to deflect readers' criticisms when he deviates from this tradition.

Wordsworth certainly participated in this literary tradition with poems like "The Female Vagrant," "Ruth," "The Thorn," and so on. It is not surprising, then, that The Excursion should contain representations of abandoned women, though the context and strategy may be somewhat unusual, in part because the women are still represented as part of the community.[6] George Crabbe's "Parish Register," like The Excursion, places tales of unfortunate women within the context of a community, though it is a community that does not and, at least according to the speaker, should not forgive.[7] Crabbe recounts the tale of Lucy, the miller's daughter who, seduced by a sailor who later dies, bears a child out of wedlock and is rejected by her father and the community (277-402). The speaker tells this tale as a warning (282). The speaker also has no problem condemning another repeat offender:

> Recorded next, a babe of love I trace,
> Of many loves the mother's fresh disgrace.--
> "Again, thou harlot! could not all thy pain,
> "All my reproof, thy wanton thoughts restrain?"
> (449-52)

Such reproof is hardly needed by Ellen (6.787-1052).

Ellen, after all, not only

> "bewailed
> A mother's loss, but mourned in bitterness
> Her own transgression; penitent sincere
> As ever raised to heaven a streaming eye!"
> (6.988-91)

And far from being unable to restrain her wanton thoughts, Ellen is no longer interested in the youth who seduced her and lacks all feelings towards him "'Save only those which to their common shame, / And to his moral being appertained'" (6.1013-14). She is appropriately, perhaps even excessively, repentant for her transgression, as even the Pastor tries to ease "'The sting of self-reproach, with healing words'" (6.1033) and the congregation prays "'For her soul's good'" at her own request (6.1041). But while she seeks their prayers, she rejects their pity with pious resignation: "'He who afflicts me knows what I can bear; / And, when I fail, and can endure no more, / Will mercifully take me to himself.'" (6.1046-48).[8] And yet the overwhelming reaction to the tale within The Excursion is one of pensive sadness. The Poet compares her to Margaret, the Wanderer blesses those who suffer, and "the Solitary's cheek / Confessed the power of nature" (6.1062-63), though whether by blushing, pallor, or tears is not revealed.

The tale, for all Ellen's pious repentance and resignation, focuses on the pathos of Ellen's situation. This pathos is reinforced by a tradition of fallen women--Ellen as "'a weeping Magdalene'" (6.814), as "'a rueful Magdalene'" (6.987), as Eve (6.826-31)[9]--but is heightened by reference to other expectations, other conventions. So Ellen commits her disappointment and heartache to "'the blank margin of a Valentine, / Bedropped with tears'" (6.892-93), lamenting man's inconstancy. She fulfils expectations of maternal devotion when her child is born, which makes their subsequent separation when she becomes a wet nurse all the more difficult. The fact that she is not even allowed to visit her own child is described as "severe" and "unjust" (6.955). Indeed the 1814 and 1820 editions of the poem are much stronger in their assignment of blame where Ellen's employers are said to act "'In selfish blindness, for I will not say / In naked and deliberate cruelty'" (1814: 976-77). But even in the final version, where they act from "over-anxious dread" (6.957), their actions heighten the pathos of Ellen's situation: she is not allowed to nurse her baby while it is dying (6.970), she can "'scarcely gain / Permission'" (6.971-72) to attend the funeral, and she is imprisoned to prevent her from visiting its grave (6.995-96). How could anyone not feel for the plight of Ellen as pathetic circumstances are piled one upon the other within the tale and then within its frame?

As if the tale of Ellen were not melancholic enough on its own, it is associated with another tale of an abandoned woman. Esther Schor notes that the tale of Ellen "is framed on both ends by references to the tale of Margaret" (186) and argues that "the story of Ellen completes that of Margaret" (187). The tale of Ellen begins with the Pastor sitting upon "A long stone-seat" (6.779), the churchyard equivalent of the cottage bench upon which the Poet finds the Wanderer in Book I (1.35).[10] It ends, of course, with the Poet's equation of Margaret and Ellen in terms of affective response, a response I have already examined in Chapter Six. Schor claims that the "opening allusion to the tale of Margaret places emphasis on the moral consciousness of both the Pastor and Ellen" (187). She compares the Wanderer's sleep with "the Pastor's moral alertness" before noting that "whereas Margaret 'sleeps in the calm earth,' the death of Ellen bespeaks disturbance, the fate of 'them / Who seek' (even if they do not reach) 'the House of Worship' (6:782)" (187).

The tale of Ellen, like the tale of Margaret, creates its own anxiety through excess, though both tales remain popular. Ellen just has too many misfortunes, too many narrative triggers for pathos. Margaret has too much hope, too many narrators. In reference to the tale of Margaret, Swann argues that Wordsworth does not merely repeat the plot of the abandoned woman for the emotional titillation it offers:

> Rather, he adopts a familiar narrative machinery because it can function culturally as an allusion to gender and class and particularly to a certain class of feminine readers; and his poetic practices, instead of working consistently to naturalize the social, tend to acknowledge as a technics--as a captivating representational economy--phenomena that socially powerful narratives seek to naturalize. (90)

Abandoned women may offer a pleasing pathos, but, as I have argued in Chapter Two, such a response is not enough. One strategy Wordsworth uses to suggest another type of response is to foreground the artifice in tales and in the act of telling tales about such subjects; another is to represent other, less conventional, subjects.

The Proud Woman is one such less conventional subject (6.675-777).[11] She may or may not have been abandoned, may or may not have been widowed; all we are told is that "'Her wedded days had opened with mishap, / Whence dire dependence'" (6.716-17). Yet unlike the tale of Ellen which follows, her tale does not elicit the reader's sympathy through pathos and has not been very popular. For while Ellen is characterized as graceful, repentant, and pathetic, the Proud Woman is singularly lacking in all these charms. She is not very attractive, at least by conventional standards:

> "Tall was her stature; her complexion dark
> And saturnine; her head not raised to hold
> Converse with heaven, nor yet deprest towards
> earth,
> But in projection carried, as she walked
> For ever musing. Sunken were her eyes;
> Wrinkled and furrowed with habitual thought
> Was her broad forehead." (6.678-84)

As a child, she sought rather "'To be admired, than coveted and loved'" (6.690), and indeed admired for her intellect. Unlike Ellen who humbly reads for self-knowledge (6.1028-29), the Proud Woman reads to satisfy a "'keen desire of knowledge'" (6.700), a desire treated with some ambiguity by the Pastor. On the one hand, her desire is inappropriate in the energy it requires; on the other, her books provide images

> "imprest
> Upon her memory, faithfully as stars
> That occupy their places, and, though oft
> Hidden by clouds, and oft bedimmed by haze,
> Are not to be extinguished, nor impaired." (6.701-05)

The Proud Woman does have the makings of other redeeming qualities, maternal love and thriftiness, but both are "'degenerate, for they both / Began in honour, gradually obtained / Rule over her, and vexed her daily life'" (6.706-08). She is even unable to produce a suitable deathbed scene. Rather than exhibit repentance, let alone pious resignation, she complains that her sister-in-law will have control of the household after she dies (6.749-56). Disturbed by this uncharitable portrait, the Pastor hurries to recount a redeeming memory--again in terms of a star (6.757-66)--and to extrapolate a moral from the tale.

Yet the moral is far from simple, as the revisions of this tale discussed in Chapter Five indicate. As Judith

Page notes, the Pastor's conclusion reduces the character of the Proud Woman to "an emblem of resignation and submission, a vehicle for communal feelings of charity and forgiveness" (108), though obviously not very successfully since readers continue to have difficulty with this tale. I disagree, however, with Page's claim that "Wordsworth acknowledges no basis for her [the Proud Woman's] frustrations other than meanness" (108). The bases of the Proud Woman's frustration are acknowledged, if not necessarily condoned. The Proud Woman must survive despite a "'dissolute Son'" (6.715), "'dire dependence'" (6.717), and gender inequality: "'What could she perform / To shake the burthen off? Ah! there was felt, / Indignantly, the weakness of her sex'" (6.717-19). Wordsworth may not have supported female emancipation, but he could and did recognize the inequality of opportunity lying behind the Proud Woman's frustration. Allowing her to have "'power of mind'" (6.677) as well as meanness, presenting this desire for knowledge in a serious manner, Wordsworth disrupts expectations of a reading public used to sad women and to mean ones with a character who is both. That the tale of the Proud Woman is immediately followed by the overdetermined pathos of the tale of Ellen may indicate a strategy to deflect criticism of this unconventional woman with a more conventional one.

I have argued, however, that conventions can bring their own problems, that the expectations of what an abandoned woman should be make the tales of Margaret and of Ellen problematic. But abandoned women are not the only subjects subjected to the pressures of literary conventions. Not surprisingly for a poem describing the dead in a churchyard, elegiac conventions play a large role. The conventions of the pastoral elegy identified by M. H. Abrams include representation of both mourner and subject as shepherds, invocation to the muses, procession of appropriate mourners, and mourning shared by all of nature (47). But Wordsworth tries to use the conventions of the pastoral elegy for the death of a shepherd, young Oswald (7.695-890). William Empson in Some Versions of the Pastoral suggests that the challenge in the traditional pastoral is "to make the clash [between elevated style and simple theme] work in the right way (not become funny)"

(12). The tale of Oswald as told by the Pastor does not quite succeed in meeting this challenge, in part because of the details presented.

The tale of Oswald is one which garnered a fair amount of praise from Hazlitt among others, perhaps because it relies so heavily upon elegiac conventions. The Pastor begins with images of grief at Oswald's funeral (7.695-700) before claiming that he will never be forgotten (7.705-14). The Pastor then resorts to Greek myths of Pan and Apollo (7.730) in order to argue that "'In him the spirit of a hero walked'" (7.739). Good at school, sports, and hunting, Oswald also demonstrates patriotic love for his country in the face of the Napoleonic threat (7.758). The Pastor even goes so far as to compare Oswald with biblical warriors in the service of faith:

> "No braver Youth
> Descended from Judean heights, to march
> With righteous Joshua; nor appeared in arms
> When grove was felled, and altar was cast down,
> And Gideon blew the trumpet, soul-inflamed,
> And strong in hatred of idolatry." (7.811-16)

And when this patriotic youth, this "'humble champion of the better cause'" (7.850), died, not only did the community provide "'A glittering spectacle'" (7.881) of grief, but nature itself mourned with

> "the tributary peal
> Of instantaneous thunder, which announced,
> Through the still air, the closing of the Grave;
> And distant mountains echoed with a sound
> Of lamentation, never heard before!" (7.886-90)

But for all of this heroic presentation, Oswald died not in battle for a glorious Protestant England, but from a chill caught while washing wool in a stream. The conventions of pastoral elegy collide with the realities of a shepherd's life. The Pastor tries to describe Oswald's fate in elevated terms: the morning before the unfortunate fleece washing incident, for example, Oswald is running with the hounds after deer:

> "One day--a summer's day of annual pomp
> And solemn chase--from morn to sultry noon
> His steps had followed, fleetest of the fleet,
> The red-deer driven along its native heights

> With cry of hound and horn." (7.861-65)

This scene might not be out of place in a romance by Scott, but is harder to picture in this Wordsworthian churchyard. The alliteration in the passage contributes to the Pastor's careful construction of Oswald as young noble youth. The Pastor also insists that "'To him, thus snatched away, his comrades paid / A soldier's honours'" (7.874-75), but despite the Pastor's best efforts to portray Oswald as a heroic figure, the fact remains that Oswald dies before he has a chance to demonstrate his heroism. The tale of Oswald demonstrates the difficulties of applying literary conventions to characters which do not fit the literary model, the difficulties of creating a pastoral elegy about a shepherd. But the problem is more than one of class or idealization versus specificity. The tale of Oswald risks slipping into bathos because life is sometimes "'fashioned like an ill-constructed tale'" (5.432) where the conclusion simply does not fit.

Indeed, many of the tales in The Excursion have odd conclusions. Despite the best efforts of the Wanderer and the Pastor to find meaning in these lives, many times there seems to be no connection between action and reward, life and death, except that proposed by an appended moral or exclamation. In this way, the tales of The Excursion differ from those told by Hannah More, for example, as More's tales spell out the consequences of behaviour and suggest such behaviour affects conditions not only in the hereafter, but in the here and now. "The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain," one of More's most popular tales, bears a disconcerting resemblance to some of the Churchyard tales, but with an important difference: the Shepherd does not require someone else to put an appropriately pious spin on his words. The tale as originally published describes an encounter between a pious hard-working shepherd and a pious thoughtful gentleman; a second part was then added which describes a second visit, this time to the shepherd's home, by the gentleman. In both parts, the narrator intrudes into the mind of the gentleman to emphasize the lessons about thrift and gratitude that the gentleman learns from the shepherd and his family. But the shepherd is much more convincing in and convinced by his own words than is Wordsworth's Matron for example. Uncomfortable doubt does not slip into the tale as the shepherd and his family simply could not turn minds to God any more than they already do. The second part also features an appropriate ending as the hard-working family is rewarded without lifting them above their station; a more comfortable cottage is made available to them as the shepherd and his wife undertake to run a Sunday school for local children.

The Churchyard tales in The Excursion, on the other hand, often end in a perfunctory manner without a clear accounting of the manner in which these lives were lived or rewarded, despite the Pastor's and the Wanderer's attempts to ascribe meaning to the characters' behaviour in the tales. So, for example, the Lovesick Youth manages to recover from love but dies from a fever (6.192-98), perhaps caused by the fact that he is always wandering around in the woods. His recovery from love, however, is put into doubt by his final act; on his deathbed he gives the woman he loved a memento of his love and suffering. This gift is described as "'a monument of faithful love / Conquered, and in tranquillity retained!'" (6.210-11), but its effect upon the woman is not considered.

Following this tale of too much perseverance in love, and before the tale of the Prodigal, who lacks perseverance, lies the tale of the persevering Miner. The Miner is said to have "'achieved a humbler victory, / Though marvellous in its kind'" (6.213-14) when through perseverance he becomes rich. The Miner's inability to "'support the weight / Of prosperous fortune'" (6.237-38), though not unexpected, does not lead to destitution and shame, though it does lead to death as he "'Quaffed in his gratitude immoderate cups; / And truly might be said to die of joy!'" (6.242-43). Faced with this conclusion, the Wanderer must struggle to frame a moral that celebrates the Miner's perseverance without condoning its object, material wealth, or the resulting dissolute behaviour. The Wanderer manages to articulate an uplifting sentiment, but only by turning the specificity of the tale into abstraction:

> "Thou from whom
> Man has his strength," exclaimed the Wanderer,
> "oh!

> Do thou direct it! To the virtuous grant
> The penetrative eye which can perceive
> In this blind world the guiding vein of hope;
> That, like this Labourer, such may dig their way,
> 'Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;'
> Grant to the wise *his* firmness of resolve!"
> (6.254-61)

But this prayer would have been so much more convincing if the Miner's firmness of resolve had not abandoned him, if the Miner had not taken to drink, or if such drinking had in fact made his life miserable. In this last scenario, a different prayer on the dangers of intemperance would have then been possible.

The Wanderer's prayer does inspire a tale of intemperance, the tale of the Prodigal (6.275-375). Of course, any tale of a prodigal son comes with biblical connotations, but this Prodigal's tale has connections with the Poet's vocation, and by extension, the Wanderer's status. For like the Poet and the Wanderer, the Prodigal is a favourite of Nature,

> "lavishly endowed

> With personal gifts, and bright instinctive wit,
> While both, embellishing each other, stood
> Yet farther recommended by the charm
> Of fine demeanour, and by dance and song,
> And skill in letters." (6.304-09)

The Prodigal's abundance of personal talents leads to "'Fair expectations'" (6.310), even as the epithet "Prodigal" comes with its own set of expectations for repentance and forgiveness. And indeed, those expectations are at first met, as he meets initial success, loses his good fortune, and returns home:

> "Yet, when this Prodigal returned, the rites
> Of joyful greeting were on him bestowed,
> Who, by humiliation undeterred,
> Sought for his weariness a place of rest
> Within his Father's gates." (6.319-23)

The problem, however, is that the tale does not end there. The Prodigal returns to the temptations of the city: "'Thrice he rose, / Thrice sank as willingly'" (6.334-35). He does finally die at home with his family and manages to display a proper repentant attitude on his deathbed (6.364).

But the suspicion remains that he just happened to die at home, that if he had regained his strength he would have returned to the city yet again. The Pastor concludes this tale with reflections on "'man unblest; / Of contradictions infinite the slave'" (6.373). The only way to resolve these contradictions is through death, but not explicitly through salvation. The Pastor claims that "'Mercy made him [the Prodigal] / One with himself, and one with them that sleep'" (6.374-75).

The odd conclusions of these churchyard tales demonstrate more than the traditional wisdom about the mutability of fortune, because such wisdom traditionally concludes with consideration of the afterlife. In these tales, however, even when claims about eternity are made, they often jar the reader as they do not seem to take account of the specificity of the tales. The characters described in _The Excursion_ sometimes die before they should; their final actions and words may be inappropriate; their deaths do not translate easily into uplifting lessons. Yet the reader is left looking for meaning, is actually encouraged in this search for meaning through the conventions employed in the tales. Literary stereotypes, poetic conventions, biblical allusions are only some of the strategies employed to deflect criticism from less conventional aspects of the poem and to guide the reader toward meaning, but this meaning is not necessarily equivalent to the pithy, and often inadequate, uplifting truths attached to the tales.

As David Bromwich notes, "When we compare the illustrative tale with its parent truth we find that they are mismatched, or that any match would be improbable; they have wills of their own and prefer to stand alone" (166). The tales often seem to resist the meaning extracted by the Pastor and the Wanderer. The Proud Woman's faith is only conjecture; Oswald and the Lovesick Youth die ordinary deaths; the Miner's actions are not clearly rewarded or punished; the Prodigal's repentance seems opportunistic, and so on. The prayers and pious sentiments inspired by these tales only work if the details of the tales are forgotten. Given this dynamic, it is necessary to consider the morals not as summation of the tales, but as part of a dramatic frame. After all, if as David Q. Smith has convincingly argued, the Wanderer and the Pastor do not share the same views in Book IX, why should the reader assume that they share the same interpretations of the tales in the earlier books of The Excursion? Paying attention to the dramatic frame, to the tension between tale and lesson, allows the reader to interrogate the meanings being offered.

I am not suggesting that Wordsworth did not believe in many of the pious sentiments on display in The Excursion, and he certainly seems to have expected other people to welcome and to agree with these sentiments. But he also winds up challenging readers' expectations as he manipulates conventions to tell these tales of humble life. Even as the associations between tales teach response, individual tales demonstrate how they frustrate such a conventional response. But The Excursion is not Wordsworth's first attempt at manipulating readers' expectations. The speaker in "Simon Lee" assigns the responsibility for constructing meaning to the reader:

> O Reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle Reader! you would find

> A tale in every thing.
> What more I have to say is short,
> And you must kindly take it:
> It is no tale; but, should you think,
> Perhaps a tale you'll make it. (65-72)

The Excursion, some might argue, does find a tale in every thing, or in every person, even as it tries to provide material for the mind's stores. But it also places responsibility for constructing meaning from such "'ill-constructed tales'" (5.432) upon the reader; it insists that "should you think / Perhaps a tale you'll make it."

I suggest that Wordsworth was trying to get his readers to recognize that life is an ill-constructed tale which may not fit conventions, may not have proportions we would like, may not be rewarded as we would wish, but that it is not therefore meaningless. After all, that lesson is what the Solitary is supposed to learn, what the speaker of "Resolution and Independence" learns decades before in his encounter with the Leech-Gatherer, what national education is supposed to teach for the good of the commonwealth. And it can be a very conservative lesson, especially as framed in The Excursion in terms of moral and religious obligation to the state (9.293-310). For Wordsworth believed that "the taste, intellectual Power, and morals of a Country are inseparably linked in mutual dependence" ("Essay upon Epitaphs" III: 85). Yet the Solitary leaves at the end of The Excursion without confirming that the lesson has been learned, leaving the reader the option of judging the lesson itself based on responses, adequate and inadequate, already learned from the tales. In the conclusion I will examine some ways in which The Excursion has been read before finally arguing for the relevance of The Excursion for late twentieth century readers of Romantic poetry.

Notes

1. See, for example, the Solitary's responses to the tales of the Matron, Ellen, and young Oswald (5.839, 6.1062, 7.903-10).

2. Susan Edwards Meisenhelder suggests he dislikes the poor, arguing that "The Solitary's disdain for such characters results from an inability to see mental power in weak frames" (87). The Solitary does rail against the conditions of the poor and the resulting torpor in Book VIII (8.334-433).

3. Bromwich refers to the Proud Woman as the Matron. In an attempt to prevent confusion of this character with the Matron from Book V, I will include my name for this character in brackets whenever I quote Bromwich's text.

4. Montgomery also criticizes The Excursion for its lack of revealed religion: "We do not mean to infer, that Mr. Wordsworth excludes from his system the salvation of man, as revealed in the Scriptures, but it is evident that he has not made 'Jesus Christ the chief corner-stone' of it" (355).

5. The Excursion has been compared to The Life and Opinions of John Buncle. John Merivale in his review of The Excursion for The Monthly Review calls the Poet's journey a "Buncling expedition" (727); since the review is unfavourable, I doubt the reference is complimentary to either work. James Mulvihill draws attention to the similarities between the Solitary and Amory's Dorick Watson, a character who is inconsolable at his wife's death.

6. As I have argued in Chapter Two even Margaret was part of a community while alive and continues to be part of community after her death, if only because her tale is so unforgettable. Ellen, of course, has the support of her mother, the Pastor, the congregation, and her faith after her child dies.

7. Wordsworth's The Lyrical Ballads and The Excursion have often been compared with Crabbe's poems about the rural poor. See, for example, Richard Hoffpauir's Romantic Fallacies and Judson Stanley Lyon's The Excursion: A Study. Lyon suggests that Books VI and VII of The Excursion form

Wordsworth's attempt "to meet Crabbe on the latter's own ground" (39). Yet in 1808 Wordsworth complained that "nineteen out of 20 of Crabbe's Pictures [in The Village] are mere matters of fact; with which the Muses have just about as much to do as they have with a Collection of medical reports, or of Law cases" ("To Samuel Rogers" 268).

8. Ellen's tale is one of the few which did not have its explicitly pious sentiments added after the poem was first published.

9. Schor argues that Wordsworth "links Ellen's fall to the Fall in Eden, and places the innocent Ellen firmly within the context of her subsequent history" (189) through an allusion to the moment when Eve in Paradise Lost goes off to work in the garden without Adam (9.385-96). Schor identifies echoes of this passage in the Pastor's description of the innocent Ellen (6.826-31).

10. The tale of Ellen is also introduced with a graphic break, the only one in The Excursion besides those which

occur in Book I. See Chapter Two for a discussion of the graphic breaks in Book I in terms of isolation.

11. The Proud Woman was identified by Ernest De Selincourt in the notes to Dorothy Wordsworth's Journals as Aggy Fisher. Judith Page argues that Aggy Fisher's tale in The Excursion is one of lost possibilities: "all of the woman's energy is constricted by conventional morality and social expectations" (108). The Excursion, I will argue, is not quite as restrictive as Page suggests, as can be seen in the treatment of the Proud Woman's desire for education.

Conclusion:

"A cabinet stored with gems and pictures":

The Excursion and its Embedded Narratives

At the beginning of Book VIII, after all the embedded narratives of *The Excursion* have been told, the Pastor compares himself in his zeal for these "'narratives of calm and humble life'" (8.6) to one

> "who unlocks
> A cabinet stored with gems and pictures--draws
> His treasures forth, soliciting regard
> To this, and this, as worthier than the last,
> Till the spectator, who awhile was pleased
> More than the exhibitor himself, becomes
> Weary and faint, and longs to be released." (8.22-28)

In this comparison, the Pastor attributes certain qualities to the embedded narratives: they are precious like gems, mimetic in some way like pictures, capable of eliciting pleasure from an audience. They also require the participation of an exhibitor, or narrator, who not only unlocks them, but who actively solicits regard. Finally, they can, or so the Pastor fears, become tiresome eventually. But tempting though it might be to compare _The Excursion_ itself to this cabinet stored with gems and pictures, the comparison breaks down. _The Excursion_ is not a neutral container for separate embedded narratives; the narratives interact with the philosophical discourse and with each other. And though the focus of this dissertation has primarily been on the embedded narratives of _The Excursion_, the philosophical discourse cannot be dismissed as merely framing or containing the narratives. In passages like "'To every Form of being is assigned . . . An _active_ Principle'" (9.1,3), Wordsworth provides challenging intellectual content and beautiful poetry. The Wanderer's reflections in Books IV, VIII, and IX deserve attention in themselves and in relation to _The Prelude_, but that is another project.

My project here has been to look at the embedded narratives in terms of reception and in terms of narrative. I have tried to merge these two general approaches in order to focus on Wordsworth as a narrative poet in a social context. I have applied concepts articulated by Hans Robert Jauss about the roles expectations and identification play in the reception of The Excursion. I have not only noted that The Excursion has disappointed many of its readers, but have also argued that this disappointment may be the result of particular strategies that Wordsworth used to challenge his readers. Jan Mukařovský has provided a framework for examining a text like The Excursion which both relies upon and violates aesthetic norms. Mukařovský also relates formal strategies to social context, a key concept for my work with The Excursion. Formalist insights into processes of defamiliarization and algebrization have allowed me to discuss formal strategies in terms of possible effects, intended or otherwise, upon readers. I have also been able to apply narratological concepts of frequency and layers of narrative in my discussion of the embedded narratives of The Excursion, again linking these concepts to possible effects. Finally, I have used the work of Alexander Zholkovsky, most explicitly in my discussion of the tale of Margaret in Chapter Two, but also throughout this dissertation in my concern with repetition, reduction, preparation, and sudden turns. Zholkovsky's concept of expressive devices offers a way to think about the effects achieved through formal strategies and, specifically for this project, a way to separate the explicit moral from the effect achieved in an embedded narrative.

I have argued that The Excursion disappointed the expectations of many of its readers, that Wordsworth tried to deflect criticism of The Excursion through specific narrative strategies, that Wordsworth challenged his readers with the embedded narratives of The Excursion. I suggest that Wordsworth tried to promote an alternate model of reading and response with the embedded narratives of The Excursion. It is a model of reading that relies heavily upon a self-conscious recognition of literary conventions. So Wordsworth draws attention to the narrative frame, to textual boundaries, to the constructed nature of tales like that of Margaret. Wordsworth also foregrounds questions of narrative frequency, duration, and order. Different narrators tell tales about the same subject to different effects, and these effects are described and modeled within the poem. In the Churchyard books the same narrator tells tales about different subjects in quick succession, and the cumulative effects are again described and modeled. These effects do not always match the uplifting truths distilled from the tales by their narrators. The role of the narrator is brought to the foreground time and time again in The Excursion, a poem with so many narrators and so many tales. Individual tales become members of a series; specificity becomes homogenized under the pressure of narrative, as in the tale of the Jacobite and the Hanoverian. Yet even as Wordsworth draws attention to the constructed nature of the embedded narratives of The Excursion, he insists upon the possibility of affective response to such tales.

I have suggested that Wordsworth develops a type of affective shorthand in the embedded narratives of The Excursion as responses learned earlier in the poem affect responses to later tales. Part of this shorthand relies upon literary conventions, but it goes beyond such conventions in the type of response expected. For Wordsworth insists that pathos is not enough, that sensationalism is not enough. Characters like Margaret and Ellen are overdetermined, thus troubling conventional models of response. Less conventional characters like the Matron, the Proud Woman, and Oswald challenge readers to adjust their expectations to the details presented in the tales. Characters like the Wanderer expand the range of models available for identification by the reader, even though such identification might be difficult. Also potentially difficult for the reader are the conclusions to many of the tales. For if, as I have argued, response depends upon previous associations and expectations, the conclusions to many of the embedded narratives in The Excursion violate these expectations as they do not follow a clear pattern of reward and punishment, despite the Pastor's and the Wanderer's attempts to ascribe a particular kind of meaning to the tales. The Wanderer in Book IX of The Excursion calls for a system of national education; I suggest Wordsworth promotes his own educational mandate with The Excursion, the education of his readers.

But readers have, for the most part, not met Wordsworth's expectations. The initial mixed reception The Excursion received may have softened by the latter part of the nineteenth century, but the new-found popularity of The

Excursion had remarkably little to do with Wordsworth's combination of philosophical discourse and embedded narratives. The second half of the nineteenth century used the embedded narratives of The Excursion as sources of pious sentiments and elements of romance. So birthday books contain quotations of the Wanderer's advice, particularly from Books IV and IX, the Jacobite and Hanoverian's inscription, descriptions of Ellen, and so on. The same passages are picked by different editors as uplifting and meaningful, passages like "'Ah! what a warning for a thoughtless man'" (6.806), the opening to the tale of Ellen. Pathos continued to be attractive to the middle-class female readers of publications like Gift of Affection: A Souvenir for 1853 where the description of Margaret sighing (1.791-831) is reprinted under the title "A Deserted Wife" without any mention of the rest of the tale or of The Excursion (111). A large gift book, Passages from The Excursion (1859), offers eleven full page etchings on steel, each accompanied by a page of excerpts from The Excursion. The excerpts focus on the moral character of the Wanderer, the tales of Margaret and Ellen, the domestic tragedy of the

Solitary, and the happy families of the Widower and the Pastor. The editors ignore all political controversy and philosophical debate in favour of pretty pictures and the lines to go with them.

Of course, not all nineteenth century uses of The Excursion strayed so far from the original poem. Wordsworth's educational aspirations for The Excursion were partially met in Wordsworth's Excursion: The Wanderer (c. 1880), one of several school texts made up of Book I. The English School-Classics series, of which it is a part, claimed that each volume was intended to provide material for one term. So for an entire term, English school children could pore over the first book of The Excursion, line by line, word by philologically explained word. Yet I do not believe that is quite what Wordsworth had in mind for "a literary Work that might live" ("Preface to 1814" viii), for his century or for our own.

I do not believe that we can read The Excursion as its original readers did. As Jan Mukařovský notes,

> the work of art itself is not a constant. Every shift in time, space or social surroundings alters

> the existing artistic tradition through whose prism the art work is observed, and as a result of such shifts that aesthetic object also changes which in the awareness of a member of a particular collective corresponds to a material artifact--an artistic product." (Aesthetic 60-61)

I do believe, however, that The Excursion can have some relevance to our context as readers of Romantic poetry, as members of the academy, as teachers of English literature. I further believe that The Excursion still has something to teach us, though I locate this lesson in the tension surrounding the embedded narratives rather than in the pious sentiments apparently so popular with Victorian readers. In the embedded narratives, I see a model of competing discourses that foregrounds questions of narrative and subjectivity, a model that may offer something to our own age's interrogation of subject positions that do not fit the Romantic ideal. In a critical climate where studies of Romanticism are expanding to include works in prose, works written by women, works dealing with issues of abolition and empire, it is also necessary to consider noncanonical works like The Excursion by canonical authors if only to examine the constructed nature of the canon in English literature. It is necessary to examine why these works have been marginalized and what our assumptions about Romanticism have been and continue to be. For even as the canon of Romanticism is reshaped, an unproblematic acceptance of new standards will only reproduce in different form the exclusions of the past. The Excursion expands the Romantic model, and while the particular form this expansion takes may be criticized today as reactionary, it should not be ignored. With The Excursion Wordsworth presents himself as an important narrative poet in a social context; we risk ignoring the narrative and the social at our own peril as we argue for relevance in the academy and in the classroom.

But much further work needs to be done in examining Wordsworth as a narrative poet in a social context. This dissertation has only examined one aspect, the embedded narratives, of one, albeit long, poem. Other poems, The Prelude of course but also works like the Salisbury Plain Poems, could be profitably examined with The Excursion in terms of narrative and affective response to narrative.

More work needs to be done on the specifics of Wordsworth's readership and the uses to which his poetry has been put in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in educational terms. We need to examine how Wordsworth's ideas about education and response were translated into practice, or more generally, what effect the Romantics had upon the educational institutions growing up in their wake. For the nineteenth century saw the beginnings of many things, including English literature as a formal subject for study in post-secondary institutions. We are heirs of such educational innovation; we need to be aware of assumptions embedded in this educational model, a model anticipated in part by *The Excursion* and its embedded narratives.

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